DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 113 SO 019 966

AUTHOR	Turner, John R.
TITLE	Western Cultural Traditions: An Historic Perspective. A Report on the Course, I.C. 211, Fall 1988.
INSTITUTION	Norwich Univ., Northfield, Vt.
PUB DATE	Dec 88
NOTE	192p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC08 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Achievement Tests; Back to Basics; Course Evaluation; Curriculum Design; Curriculum Development; *Educational Quality; *Integrated Curriculum; Postsecondary Education; *School Effectiveness; Social Studies; *Teacher Effectiveness; Teaching Methods; Undergraduate Students; Undergraduate Study; *Western Civilization
IDENTIFIERS	*Norwich University Vermont College

ABSTRACT

The Integrating Studies Program at Vermont College was designed not only to help students master the dictates of established disciplines, but also to inquire about the nature of knowledge. As such, it reflects the growth of the general studies movement and that movement's desire to restore the bond between education and character-formation. The "Western Cultural Traditions" class was taught to 15 average students, and contained the readings of the "Bible," the "Odyssey," the "Republic," "the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius," and "Henry V." The evaluation includes five sections on the design of the class, with an introductory essay by the class instructor and several examples from each section. Twenty-seven memoranda are included, written by the instructor and designed to review classes, to expand on topics not discussed in class, or to organize issues that had been raised randomly. During each of the regular class periods, students were asked to write for five minutes on a topic related to the day's lessons. This insured active involvement in the learning process and helped students to make a connection between liberal arts study and everyday life. The individual responses of the entire class to 27 questions are given. A critical essay of 3,000 words was assigned, and a final examination consisting of a choice of seven essay questions was given to the class in advance of the examination period. Three essay samples and six examples are given. Comments from the course evaluation are also included. (PPB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED308113

A COURSE REPORT

I.C. 211

Western Cultural Traditions
An Historic Perspective

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John R. Turner
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

SO 019 962

VERMONT COLLEGE
OF
NORWICH UNIVERSITY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

I. C. 211

WESTERN CULTURAL TRADITIONS

AN HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

A REPORT ON THE COURSE

FALL 1988

Compiled by
John R. Turner
December 1988

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. The Course and Its Setting

II. Memoranda to Students

III. In-Class Writing Exercises

IV. Term Papers

V. Examinations

VI. Course Evaluations

The Course and Its Setting

Any report on a course in the Integrating Studies Curriculum at Vermont College should begin with the acknowledgement that neither the course nor the program is an isolated phenomenon. Over the past decade a considerable movement of educational reform has grown up among American colleges and universities. The movement has no single name, but under a variety of titles it has addressed the question of whether a college education should imply a uniform standard of intellectual attainment. Are there intellectual skills all college graduates should have? Are there bodies of knowledge all graduates should have encountered? Most perplexing of all, are there moral characteristics which identify educated men and women?

It's interesting to speculate why this movement should have occurred at this time. Various answers have been put forward, so many in fact that a sceptical observer might be led to wonder about the academy's self-knowledge. My own view corresponds with the suspicion that the general public is beginning to believe the academy offers little that matters outside its own walls or that doesn't directly serve the corporate economy. Most significantly, the belief is growing that the academy teaches virtually nothing that promotes good citizenship or personal integrity.

An objection might be made that the academy is not supposed to teach these things, but that objection would have to take account of the truth that during most of our national history the people have believed, if somewhat vaguely, that education and decency are related, and that by investing their money in education they were getting a return in honorable behavior.

As the academic disciplines have become more specialized, and more sophisticated, such notions are scorned as naive. Successful scholars have little time to worry about the impact of their work on the moral culture, and the hierarchies of influence through which they pursue their careers offer no reward for such speculation. The gulf between ordinary thought and so called higher-order discourse grows, and as it does, the inhabitants of the academic disciplines have less and less to say to anyone outside their own ranks. English professors write only for other English professors, academic poets are read only by other academic poets, and psychologists deliver papers to audiences made up mainly of other psychologists.

This is a merry system with many rewards. It provides immense ego-gratification, and it tends to screen those who are in it from having to account to anyone other than those who share their presuppositions. It would go on forever with no change except in the direction of more highly-wrought theory were it not that it needs economic support. The prime question in higher education today is whether the public will continue to pay the professors for doing what they do.

So long as the connection between education and good behavior was defensible, the public could be counted on to pay. But, if that link is severed, the economic basis of the liberal arts institution is threatened.

Obviously, little of this is pertinent to those disciplines which train people to apply technical skills. Society needs technically competent workers and it will continue to pay for their production, whether or not that process takes place within the academy. The danger for academic technologists is not that support will be withdrawn, but that, over time, the public will find better places than colleges and universities to teach the technological abilities.

No matter. What I'm discussing here is the underlying reason for the growth of the general studies movement, and my point is that it gains strength from a perceived need to repair or restore the bond between education and character-formation. Consequently, any successful program of general education must address that problem, and do so in a way that honors both the moral sensibility of society and the intellectual standards of thoughtful people.

In a diverse culture such as ours, this isn't an easy problem. Nor is it soluble by the techniques most attractive to us. Over the past century, we have become a professionalized society, and we have got in the habit of viewing the professions as appropriate tools for solving the problems in their purview. The difficulty is that some problems cannot be professionalized. Democracy is one of them, and education is another. Some sub-systems of education can be professionalized, but education itself cannot.

When I consider education, I am often reminded of Dickens's Tommy Traddles, who cheerfully remarked, "The society of girls is a very delightful thing, Copperfield. It's not professional, but it's very delightful." When you think carefully, you come to see that the society of girls and education have a lot in common.

The company of girls, in the manner Tommy Traddles desired, can't be achieved by formula. Young men learn that to their chagrin. By a similar process, society seems to be learning that education can't be achieved by formula either. We can't divide knowlege up into its constituent parts, let each person learn a portion, and still have the fruits of an educated populace. That process produces wonderfully intricate systems, but few people who can make sensible use of them.

It seems clear that we are nearing the end of an educational era, one that has lasted about a century, and which, perhaps, had its symbolic beginning with the inauguration of

Daniel Coit Gilman as the president of the Johns Hopkins University in 1875. Mr. Gilman has an honored place in the history of education as a leading figure in the movement which transformed the university from a transmitter of culture to a seeker after new knowledge. At Johns Hopkins, he celebrated the new-style scholar as one who would gain "the unique experience of having contributed some tiny brick, however small, to the Temple of Science, the construction of which is the sublimest achievement of man."

It's a revealing metaphor. Mr. Gilman may well have been the beneficiary of such a strong and coherent culture he didn't have to reflect that sublime structures aren't created simply by piling up bricks. Somebody has to make use of them. Somebody has to figure out where they go. Who that is to be has not been of major concern to the university for a long time.

When Mr. Gilman retired in 1902, Woodrow Wilson commemorated his achievement with these words: "You were the first to create and organize in America a university in which the discovery and dissemination of new truth were conceded a rank superior to mere instruction...." Mr. Wilson's estimation of the importance of instruction has been the dominant force in university organization ever since. It has now proceeded so far that producing the three-hundredth article on the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne to appear in a single year wins a scholar more prestige than teaching a young person to read The Scarlet Letter. The Temple of Science begins to emit a cancerous hue.

Naturally, the reform of a century-old system is not smooth business. Considering the interests in opposition, its progress has been surprising, and speaks well for the innate idealism of the academic vocation. Nor is specialization the only complexity general education has had to face. As the disciplines entrenched themselves, higher education launched an astounding effort to extend its services to a larger percentage of the people than has ever before been attempted. Because we're still in the midst of this sweeping democratization, we can scarcely recognize how audacious it has been. In just a pair of generations, American colleges and universities have moved from enrolling a small minority of the population to an attempt to educate more than half the people who graduate from secondary schools. Such an immense shift has obviously affected the services delivered.

It has also affected the deliverers. The Hollywood version of the well-tailored, self-confident, broadly-read professor can scarcely be found on the average college campus. Perhaps he never existed in great numbers, but today he is certainly almost extinct. Many of us might say, good riddance, but the disappearance of that image has created a problem for general education, one whose impact was succinctly described by David Riesman a few years ago in his general survey, On Higher Education:

> Quite apart from the risk-averse behavior that is understandable in the face of the current stasis and retrenchment in academia, a further factor may be at work in the disappearance of novel offerings, whether in in the form of general education or in the form of embryonic new specialties -- namely, the probability that during the period of great expansion of academia in the 1960s, many faculty members were recruited who neither came from cultivated home backgrounds nor had overcome not doing so through pre-collegiate schooling. (Public and even private schools were increasingly lax.) Such persons would not be capable of either general education courses or the novel narrowness recommended by Campbell, owing to a lack of sufficient cultural background to scan the horizon beyond their immediate disciplines. Rather they live, like most Americans, on a plane of flat and localized contemporaneity.

This truth, though it points clearly to an aspect of the difficulty, can't frequently be discussed. It cuts too close to the bone.

When one as kindly disposed towards higher education as David Riesman can make such a statement, it's not surprising that others have been even more slashing. Since 1984, academia has sustained a series of attacks and indictments that question the heart of the enterprise. The best summary of the early wave was done by Andrew Hacker, and published under the title, "The Decline of Higher Education," in the New York Review on February 13, 1986. Hacker inscribed his findings graphically:

> The three reports on higher education are most severe on college faculties. All three rate the general run of teachers as mediocre or indolent, with most professors indifferent to larger educational aims.

Over the past two years, the criticism has become even more biting through the publicity aroused by Secretary of Education William Bennett. It would be hard to find a public figure who has ever concentrated the academy's attention in the manner of Mr. Bennett. Nor has anyone ever been more denounced by the professorial rank and file (with the possible exception of Alan Bloom). Mr. Bennett's message has been nothing if not direct, and it has amounted to the charge that the world of higher education is greedy, dense, and lazy.

In October of 1986, he took his charges into the sanctum sanctorum. Speaking at Harvard, he announced that "there is an extraordinary gap between the rhetoric and the reality of

American higher education." In the storm following this address, he backed off not an inch, excoriating the professors with the judgment that "the real problem is not a lack of money but failure of vision."

Mr. Bennett has grabbed the attention, but other critics, with quieter voices and less political overtones, have made similar points. Just this year, Lynne Cheney, Bennett's successor at the National Endowment for the Humanities, issued a report to the Congress and the President titled, *Humanities in America*, which cited narrowness and questionable publication as twin forces tearing down good teaching. Just about the same time, the Task Force on General Education of the Association of American Colleges put out its pamphlet, *A New Vitality in General Education*, which argued that many institutional policies oppress imagination, and that the university system is not designed to promote broad learning.

This literature has become so voluminous one could make a career of analyzing it. For those who have the time, that may be a good way to spend a life. But I suspect deep scholarship won't reveal much more than ordinary reading. This entire flood says little more than that the students are failing to learn because what they're being taught is either dead, foolish, or impossibly arcane. It is not related to their lives. It does not address the ongoing problems of living in and improving a civilization. At best, it helps sustain the existing economic system by preparing students for entry-level employment.

Some of this is over-heated. College students continue to read good books and to discuss important ideas. Some observers argue there has been no decline, that the quality of learning is as rich as it ever was. Given the protean nature of the data, those pleased with the status quo can usually find information to comport with their happiness.

The issue is not whether we are progressing or declining, but rather whether the existing system can meet societal ideals. There, it seems to me, there's no question. It cannot. The ax has been laid to the root of the current system, and it is going to die. It is not going to die so quickly that those who believe education is a matter of lecturing and multiple choice quizzes won't be able to live out their lives and die happily along with it. But, for those who care about the future of their institutions, the obsolescence of the current system raises fascinating challenges.

Choices will have to be made, and though no one can predict exactly what the options will be, certain possibilities seem to be emerging. The first, which most will choose, will be an attempt to hold onto the status quo, making marginal improvements in accordance with the standards of the passing age. This is a formula for dribbling into mediocrity, yet it will be popular because it won't require new thought.

A second option will involve deciding that colleges have evolved beyond notions of cultural coherence and must find their role as adjuncts to certain economic enterprises. In these, a semblance of liberal learning will be maintained so that a kind of formulaic literacy can be taught and the rules of the economic game, usually to be called professional ethics, can be inculcated. A degree of economic health may be possible for such places.

There will be institutions which are colleges in name only, where people will be trained to punch keyboards and assemble prefabricated systems.

A handful, mostly of a religious orientation, may try to follow Mr. Bennett's prescriptions and get involved in a "return to basics" and the protection of Western Civilization. These could well be interesting experiments, but I suspect they will fail because they will attract mostly unimaginative people, and the few genuine thinkers they manage to enroll will eventually run afoul of rigid administration. The champions of this approach tend to think of themselves as practical-minded people, but often their practicality is of a curious sort. It reminds one of professors who believe that students can be taught to write through grammar lessons, as though words were put onto a page so commas can be distributed correctly among them. Persons of this persuasion also tend to believe that students can be taught to speak correctly and politely without learning the meaning of words.

The saddest feature of institutions which bill themselves as conservative may be that they will gobble up intelligent, Aristotelian thinkers who would serve their ends more nobly by carrying on isolated struggles among loose-thinking colleagues than by barricading themselves among supposedly like-minded disciples. The latter is the worst fate a true conservative can suffer in this society.

Self-possessed institutions will doubtless face the epistemological revolution and make changes to deal with it. They are likely to emerge from the turmoil with stronger reputations -- if the general culture remains vital. This, of course, will require bringing critical intelligence to bear on the difficulties of a fragmented, mobile, and somewhat disoriented culture. In the end, it will probably demand a renaissance of coherence, though what the foundation of the new system will be I'm not prophetic enough to say.

I will predict that the existing taxonomy of knowledge won't last another half-century. The current humanistic disciplines as well as the social sciences have pretty much done what they can do, and they are already beginning to consume themselves in internal wars. It's hard to believe, for example, that the public will continue to pay English professors to teach youth that literature has no meaning. Scan the pages of most learned journals and before too long you'll come on an article doubting the value of the field it inhabits.

This is not to say that the study of history, philosophy, literature, et cetera will go under. The subjects have perennial charm. But the aspirations of the attached professions are enfeebled, and are unlikely, by themselves, to achieve revitalization.

One of my colleagues is fond of quoting an associate who repeatedly spoke of the Ph. D. as "that pale flower growing on the grave of the humanities." It's a nice little quip, but it misapprehends the situation. It's not the humanities which are moribund but rather the purposes for which the doctoral machinery grinds.

As long as people are human, the humanities will look out for themselves, and they don't necessarily need the university for their sustenance.

Higher education, though, if it is to be what it has claimed for itself, needs the humanities -- needs them desperately, and needs them in a different form than it now has them.

In the long run, ideas form institutions rather than the other way about. Consequently, there is no decision more important for an institution than the main idea it chooses to pursue. It remains to be seen whether the idea of general education is going to be transformative or mere fiddling. If it turns out to be the latter, it won't be worth the inconvenience it causes. Most of its critics assume it can be little more than that, and write it off as one more attack of the pedagogical neurosis which seems to be endemic in higher education. They may be right. On the other hand, they may be wrong. Important changes do come along from time to time, and those who dismiss them end up being dismissed themselves.

At the least, the idea of a general refurbishing of higher education's core has built up a head of steam. More than two thousand of America's colleges and universities are reported to be engaged in some sort of renovation. Virtually all of these are attempting to identify the intellectual habits and the body of knowledge that ought to lie at the center of each baccalaureate program. It seems unlikely that efforts this widespread will leave the college curriculum unchanged.

Still, an institution ought not to do something just because everybody else is doing it. A college may consider involvement for that reason, but actually doing it ought to be a matter of conviction. At this University, we need to raise the question of what our educational convictions are, and the Integrating Studies Program at Vermont College can help us with the answer.

This program, now in its second year, can scarcely yet be called a settled operation. It's more an investigation than anything else. It poses the question of whether the University has beliefs about the common attributes needed by educated persons in the waning years of the twentieth century.

Another way of putting the question is whether the University wants to get involved in discussing the cultural shape of the future? Or will it be satisfied to occupy the position the future offers it? Certainly, the latter would require less energy, and it might provide just as great economic security. But I doubt it could be called a brave choice.

The course being reported here is therefore poised in an interesting position. It was planned and pretty well carried out in accordance with the nascent ideas that brought the program into being. Yet, being new, it afforded opportunities for exploration. It offered, in particular, the chance to ask whether the kind of students we enroll at this university can benefit from studies which expect them not only to master the dictates of established disciplines but also to inquire about the nature of knowledge.

Some evidence about the success of the experiment is contained in the following pages. I doubt I have reported the course fully enough to give an adequate sense of what happened. Yet, information is offered which I hope will help readers form opinions about the possibilities of core studies in the undergraduate years.

In any event, the material gathered here should accomplish one goal. It should offer a peep into one of the genuine arcana of the modern world, the individual college course. It's a curious thing that though courses function as the essential building blocks of higher education, for the most part we have little knowledge of their scope. We say, with considerable confidence, that it takes about forty of them to constitute a baccalaureate program. But what are they? How do they relate to one another? How much work do they involve? How much learning comes out of them? What standards do they incorporate? What intellectual skills do they require? Are they all of the same general scale, or does a semester hour in one course mean something entirely different from a credit hour in another?

We know little about courses other than the ones we've taught or taken. Telling about one course won't answer questions about others. But, it may afford a point for beginning comparisons.

The title of the course was "Western Cultural Traditions: An Historical Perspective." Students were expected to read several classic texts and to discuss them in their historical settings. The readings I chose were eight books of the Bible, Homer's Odyssey, Plato's Republic, The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, and Shakespeare's Henry V. I regarded this as a fairly light reading load for a four-hour course. The students, however, disagreed. They told me the course required more reading than normal.

I was still operating on an old standard -- two hours of study for each hour of class time -- which may have gone by the board. A recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education reported that the average student spends about twenty-seven hours a week on academics, including time in class. If that's the case, then the study outside class doesn't even match the the meeting time. If students really are reading only about ten to twelve hours a week, it's hard to believe they are approaching intellectual maturity.

The fifteen students fell within an average range of ability. They seemed not to come from backgrounds where the discussion of ideas is common. None showed overt enthusiasm for the readings, though, as the course progressed, several told me that they had become fascinated by one or another of the books. All of them were decent and reasonably courteous people, though in class they tended at times to be so passive that a sensitive teacher might have regarded them as being aggressively uninterested. They did not demand good teaching, nor were they easily taught. Yet, I finished the course believing that they would learn, and even appreciate learning, if an effort were made to teach them.

I believe they were representative of the middle ranks of American college students, and I regard them as both the challenge and hope of the future. Society will not be determined by the graduates of elite colleges. It will be determined by people very much like the students in this course. If they find their way to learning, they have the potential to make a brighter world. If they do not, social conditions will worsen, and their children will probably not be as teachable as they are. Much is riding on what happens to young people all across the nation who resemble the students we are observing here.

My goal was to help them achieve meaning. My expectation was that meaning is best achieved by encountering voices who have proved over the stretch of centuries that they have something important to say. Meaning is a difficult concept involving unanswerable questions. It can not avoid touching on religious issues, particularly when one asks (as one must) whether it is discovered or made. Yet for all the imponderables it involves, trying to make contact with it is an essential feature of liberal learning.

The course coincided with the airing on television of interviews Bill Moyers conducted over the past year with notable intellectual figures. I saw the one he did with Robert Bellah, in which Mr. Bellah commented that meaning must arise from the contemplation of undeniable good. I agree with that, so I encouraged the students to give thought to their own beliefs about good and evil, to ask themselves where their beliefs came from, and to consider whether their thoughts about the morality of everyday life were related to the materials we were reading.

Teachers are not, or least ought not to be, preachers. One has to be careful in dealing with moral questions to maintain standards of openness and to help students separate fact from opinion. Yet, the whole liberal arts enterprise is based on the expectation that hard thinking about morality will lead to improved behavior. We cannot run away from the connection between the materials we recommend and the behavioral impact they make.

The issue of behavior leads back to the old pedagogical question of relevance. Students have been known to say that reading classical material has no relevance for them. Too often the academy has scoffed, instead of pausing to ask whether the process of instruction makes the charge valid. Certainly, students are right to be indifferent to studies remote from their own concerns. It's not surprising, given their inexperience, that they would question the practicality of reading Homer, or Plato, or Shakespeare. Most of them know few adults who do such reading. Teaching by example, the adult world tells them that close reading is mere exercise for school children. No wonder they are eager to get beyond it, to grow up, and to encounter the important, mature, developed aspects of life.

On the other hand, one factor favoring classical study is the students' clear perception that the adult world is not as it should be. Some students are so cynical about current society they have no interest in it other than to find a niche safe from the prevailing stupidity. The idea of social justice is, for them, a naive dream. But most are not that negative. Most are simply confused about what they might do, or about how they might start contemplating the problem.

In that confusion the seed of liberal learning lies. The academy has been too timid about wading into the maelstrom of student doubt. It is easier to lecture on a high plane and let the students climb up to it if they can. Consequently, too often college students see liberal learning as something impossibly removed from their own lives, and they turn their faces away.

We tried in this course to make connections. We made fewer than I had hoped, but enough did happen to convince me that integration is possible. Students of the background and orientation we had here can find relevance in classical statements of human aspiration. When they do, they feel they have accomplished something and they develop a taste for further education.

The materials that follow give a sense of this development in a single course. Doubtless, they will strike readers variously. Some may feel that the students didn't learn as much as they should. Some may think they fell short of a high standard. If negative assessments are justified, I am more to blame than the students. I think the evidence clearly supports one conclusion: the students whose work appears here will repay good teaching, and not just teaching about techniques. They are worth teaching in the most discriminating ways, and educational maturity is as important for them as for anyone.

The Integrating Studies Program is needed by the students currently enrolled at Vermont College. I hope the University will find the energy and intelligence to continue expanding and refining it.

John R. Turner
Vermont College,
Norwich University
Montpelier, Vermont
December 20, 1988.

Memoranda to Students

Each class period, I handed the students a short essay I had written since the previous meeting. These dealt with topics we had discussed or that were coming up that day. Mostly they were reviews of previous classes, expanded slightly to take in topics we had not managed to discuss, or to organize issues which in conversation had been raised randomly.

A lesson I repeated, probably to the point of boring the students, was the importance of recall. I wanted to convince them that five minutes spent going over material encountered a few days earlier was as valuable for long-term retention as an original hour of study.

I also wanted to show them that written ruminations about discussions and previous reading is relatively painless, and one of the easiest ways fix ideas and theories in the mind.

The academic market place abounds with aids to learning. I'm sure students often feel deluged with them. Yet when they are produced for a theoretical group of learners, they never achieve immediacy. They are like a mimeographed Christmas message as compared to a heartfelt letter from a friend addressed just to you.

I'm convinced that teachers don't write enough to their students. They talk up writing more than they practice it. One reason is they don't want to show vulnerability. In the rush of a semester, one can't turn out polished prose. Mistakes and awkwardnesses will creep in, and we don't want our students to see that we're mistaken and awkward people. Yet, if we care about learning, we ought to put that fear aside. One can't learn without mistakes; one can't can't learn without occasionally appearing awkward. If we signal students that they should always mask these deficiencies, we build a wall between them and experiences that will promote learning.

I recognize this is a hard principle to practice, and I recognize it particularly right now. As I glance over the following essays, I can barely restrain editorial impulse. But, I want this to be an accurate report of the course, and that demands I give the reader the essays just as I gave them to the students. So, here they are, without a single emendation. I wrote these things sometimes in the wee hours of the morning, and sometimes at lunch before class that same afternoon. They aren't pretty. But, I think they did serve some of the purposes I had in mind. If nothing else, they showed the students that I would put words on a page and let them look at it.

August 30, 1988

To: Students, I.C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: The Nature of the Course

In this course we will be discussing texts that have been read for centuries, have formed the foundation of cultural systems, and that address the ultimate questions of life. It would be peculiar (and, I think, disheartening) if you did not have an emotional response to them.

You should feel free to express your feelings about the readings and the questions they raise. There is little virtue in feigning dispassion when you don't feel that way. On the other hand, we will need to read all this material with a critical eye, almost as if we were visitors from another planet and were confronting it pure, as if we did not know the powerful effect it has had on human culture. In order to get the most out of the course, you'll need, in a way, to divide yourself into two persons: the real you who reacts feelingly, passionately, and the pretend you, who looks at everything with an innocent rationalism. If these two selves get into intense arguments, then you can be pretty sure you're using the course as it should be used.

Another measure of the course's effectiveness for you will be the intentions you develop toward these texts. If you're reading the Bible rightly, if you're reading Homer rightly, if you're reading Shakespeare rightly, then you can never be finished. You will want to go on reading them all your life. I've found, for example, in reading the Gospels to prepare for this course, that they have affected me more powerfully than ever before. I've seen things in them that I've never seen before. The other night, going over the ninth chapter of John, the following two verses leapt out at me:

> Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt, but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

There's enough in that simple passage to sum up a lifetime of social observation.

From the above I hope you can see that I want this course not to be just an academic exercise, but an experience that will help us all form ourselves into the people we want to be. There's little good in academic work of this sort if it doesn't help shape our character and influence our behavior in everyday life.

August 31, 1988

To: Students, I. C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: "Humanities, General Studies, Integrating Studies"

I hope some order was apparent in our discussion of these terms yesterday. But, in case there wasn't as much as needed, I offer this memo as a possible boost to coherence.

The major point about "the humanities" is that down the ages there have been topics which have been thought of as special, which somehow were "higher" than ordinary subjects. These formed the curriculum of the system of moral education, whether it took place in formal schools or not. Until recently, the literature of ancient Greece and Rome was thought to be special in this respect, and that's the reason it formed almost the entire university curriculum.

The most important feature of these "moral" or "character-building" subjects was that they were considered essential for all educated people. There was a certain amount of fashion in this, but there was also the belief that in order for a culture to function, in order for people to talk seriously to one another, they had to know certain things in common. It wasn't thought sufficient to know just anything in common, the ordinary gossip of the streets, for example, but rather it needed to be something with the philosophical and spiritual depth to promote discussion of most profound subjects. You might almost say that a successful culture was seen as one in which the people know how, and have the language necessary, to converse with one another about their ultimate concerns.

Over the past generation in America the feeling has grown up that we have lost that ability. And this feeling has been strengthened by study after study which tended to demonstrate that people in the age group 17-24 know less than that same age group knew in the 1950s, and that they know less than the comparable age groups in Japan and most of the countries of Europe today. Consequently, we hear people talking about the need for "general education," meaning by the term the learning that ought to be the possession of every educated person, and the learning that is necessary in order to converse with others about pressing social, political, and moral problems.

The difficulty is that having scrapped the general education systems that were in place in the 1950's, we don't know what to replace them with. We understand that we have to know something in common in order to be able to talk to one another, but we don't know what it is.

That's why the efforts to construct general education programs -- like the one you are in now -- are often awkward, and can appear disjointed to the students. Sometimes we hear students say, "Why should we serve as the guinea pigs?" If you think about it, the answer is obvious. This is a pressing need. We have to start somewhere. And start-ups always have their rough spots. The beginnings of things, though, often offer, in compensation for their awkwardness, the excitement of a fresh start. That, by the way, is the same condition teachers encounter in working with people who are making a first, or a fresh, start on adult life.

A common criticism of higher education over the past generation has been that though it may do well in teaching specialized subjects, it does horribly in explaining to people how these subjects relate to others, and why they are important to general social and personal life. A typical joke about the Shakespeare scholar is that he can tell you everything about Shakespeare except why it makes sense to read him. Out of this sense of fragmentation and the alienation of one expert from another has come a determination on the part of some educators to examine connections, and to find ways to explain to students how learning, and especially the learning that is designed for everybody, relates to the healthy functioning of society and to building decent personal lives. Another way of saying this is that there's a need to demonstrate how all the parts of learning fit together. In response to that need, we have established what we call our "Integrating Studies Curriculum."

In Integrating Studies we don't always know exactly how to approach our goals. But we do believe the goals are worthy -- and not just worthy, but also essential to what we are trying to achieve in the college. Consequently, we have to keep trying to find effective ways to help students put the parts of their education together.

Consequently, the humanities or those subjects designed to enlighten all humans, and general studies or the learning that's for everybody, and integrating studies or the process of putting the parts of learning together and making them a real part of one's life -- all three of these -- are at the base of what we're trying to accomplish in this course. We'll continue to refer to them throughout the term. That's why I thought it would be useful to try to clarify what is generally meant when these words are used.

September 2, 1988

To: Students, I. C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: History

I've just read the cards you wrote in response to my request that you describe an event from the past about which you feel strongly. I enjoyed them; they are lively and generally well-expressed. The thing that impressed me most was the range of topics. There were responses about slavery, racism, military tactics, the ethics of warfare, Vietnam, murder, the professional status of nurses, the treatment of women, Star Wars, a new practice in the Corps of Cadets, local education, native Americans, family life, taxation, and freedom. That's a rich variety from sixteen people. Notice that virtually all the topics involve moral questions. That alone tells us something about the nature of historical inquiry. When people think about the past, they naturally want to know not only what happened, but also the rightness and wrongness of the events being scrutinized.

Over the years, there have been voices crying for a kind of pure history, perfectly scientific, divorced from moral judgment. Not only is that impossible; it strikes me as being hostile to the true spirit of history.

One of the books we'll be talking about later in the course will be Werner Jaeger's Paideia. It is a lengthy analysis of the ideals of Greek culture and the educational system that was designed to support those ideals. A basic point Jaeger makes about education among the ancient Greeks was their belief that true history must be based on spiritual kinship. In other words, the Greeks reasoned that we look to the past to find evidence of moral and ethical systems related, however remotely, to our own convictions. If there were no relationship, whatsoever, how could we be interested?

The concern for spiritual kinship reminds me of a statement from Herman Melville which went something like this: "In fiction it is as in religion. It creates another world, but one to which we feel the tie" (don't hold me to this word for word, I'm quoting from memory). If we can say that about fiction and religion, we can also say it about history. It fascinates and instructs us because it is another world. Yet, we can take an interest in it only if we find the tie.

The main point I was trying to get across yesterday was that finding that tie involves a personal quest, and that you have full authority to make the search. Nobody has any greater right to find meaning in history than you do (remember the three blobs). We all have a duty to respect the facts, and to get them as straight as possible. But, once we've done that, we have the right, each of us, to make of them what we can, and to bring them together with our personal experience to create an understanding that nobody else can create. That's one of the reasons history -- in its true sense -- is endlessly fascinating: because it is endlessly various. No one will ever tell the final version of history, as least not as long as humans exist.

September 4, 1988

To: Students, I. C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: Learning Techniques

It was probably a mistake to use Friday as I did. Lecturing about good learning is usually a violation of the lesson being preached. The temptation to tell people how to do something, rather than doing it with them, is great. I'll try harder to resist it.

Even so, we shouldn't get so committed to the anti-lecture fashion that we can't learn by listening or reading. The point to remember is that reading or listening is ordinarily the first step to learning. Then, something else has to follow.

What?

That's a hard question. It depends on the learner, on how the learner can have fun. I can't tell you how to have fun. And you can't tell me. What we can say to each other is that if we can't have fun with learning, then we won't do it well.

I realize some students think I'm nuts when I say, "Make games of your courses." Yet, that's the best advice I have. If you can't find ways to make games of your courses, you won't learn much. All good work is advanced play.

Learning to write involves long, long play-periods. For every word you write for somebody else to see, you ought to write a dozen for the same reason the TV says you ought to drink Diet Coke.

Somebody might be saying, "What if that's not fun to me? what if I don't like to play that way?"

Well, that's a problem, because what that person is saying, whether he knows it or not, is "I don't want to be liberally educated." Still, if he's in college, why not try to get as much fun from it as possible? Why not try it? He might like it. I would guarantee him this: that if he would write five hundred words every day for a hundred days, his college studies would start being more enjoyable. And if he would keep on for two hundred days, he would begin to be fascinated. And, if he made it a whole year, he would be hooked.

He might say that he can't think of anything to write about. But that would be silly. How about the gossip he hears? How about his fantasies, his dreams? Frustrations and hatreds are always good topics; they've inspired an immense amount of great literature. There's always plenty write about, if you're not worried in the beginning about anybody else's seeing it.

The funny thing about writing is that as the words go onto the paper, phrases and sentences begin to appear that can be used for public expression. Let's take this guy we were thinking about a minute ago, who somehow decides to write the five hundred words every day for a year. At the end of that time he would have a mine of material he could use in building many of his college assignments. And nobody could accuse him of plagiarism because he would always be quoting himself.

Words are magic. Every time you write one down, a little of that magic passes over to you. But keep in mind that anything that's magic is dangerous. If you write down bad words, like "whereas, "or "interface," or "lifestyle," then some of their stuff sneaks into your system. Keep it up long enough and you'll find yourself turning into a high-ranking government official. My general advice is to steer clear of yucky words unless you're writing comedy skits.

College needs to be a time for experimenting, and for developing good habits. A pleasant feature of this time is that mistakes don't cost as much as they will later on. So, there's little reason not to try out new things. With respect to writing, you ought to experiment with journals, and notebooks, and note cards, and anything else you can think of, including computer programs. When you find something that gives you a real sense of fun, that you always want to come back to, then you've discovered a treasure. Hold on to it, and make it stronger and stronger. The learning systems you build up will become part of your character, and they're probably the most important thing you'll take away from college. So, try to make sure they give you pleasure, and make you feel better about yourself.

September 9, 1988

To: Students, I.C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: Thinking About Beginnings: The Biblical Era

Genesis has to do with a number of beginnings: the creation of the world, the origin of Hebrew thought, the foundation of Jewish society. It's also the topic with which we begin the substance of our course, and the topic that should help us formulate the questions that will stay with us till December.

Our visit yesterday with Mr. Orlack was supposed to give us some sense of the questions we need to ask about an important text as we try to approach it in a fresh way. I don't know how smart a guy he is, and he may not have asked exactly the right questions, but the general drift of our discussion with him did give us a hint of the sort of framework we need to construct for each subject we take up.

In any course it's often the simple things that get overlooked. Yet, it is the answers to those simple first questions that should always be at the base of our investigation. We can never get too sophisticated to stop asking:

What kind of book is it?

Where did it come from?

What was the purpose in writing it?

Why do people read it?

What does it say to me?

In sorting out our answers, it is always helpful to have a few prominent facts in mind. In the case of Genesis, some of these might be:

That the Biblical era stretched over the period from the eighteenth century B.C until near the end of the first century A.D, or slightly less than two thousand years.

That the Bible deals with the history of people who lived in a fairly small area of the Middle East.

That the culture it describes evolved from an older culture which had been in existence for at least two thousand years. This Mesopotamian culture, which flourished in the great valley created by the Tigris and Euphrates ~~Valleys~~ Rivers, was a highly complicated civilization, with its own understanding of the creation and nature of the world, its own political and economic system, its own religious faith, its own legends and myths.

That the Bible was put together over the whole period of the Biblical era, and that we do not possess any of the original documents on which it was written down. The greatest portion of what we know about the Bible comes from copies of, and commentary about, writings that are now lost, and will probably never be discovered.

That history is the story of times and people about which we have enough documentary evidence to assure us that we know something of what and who they were. Thinking of history in this sense, we can say that the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, are quasi-historical figures. They may have existed, but we don't have enough evidence about them to deal with them as we can with Napoleon or George Washington.

Each of these points can influence the way we read the Bible. If we keep them consciously in mind, we're likely to read with greater comprehension than we would otherwise.

September 13, 1988

To: Students, I.C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: Abraham and Monotheism

I trust that our discussion of the 12th chapter of Genesis yesterday gave some feeling of the complexity involved in reading the whole Bible. It is genuinely an endless book. But that's not a matter for discouragement, but rather a great opportunity.

The English critic Matthew Arnold once said that he who knows only the Bible knows not even that. In dealing with a book which has evolved from an oral tradition, we often encounter texts that had become mysteries by the time they were written down. A characteristic of an oral tradition is that it carries along bits of information long after the reason for them has been forgotten. That may have been the case with the wife-sister mōtif which occurs three separate times in Genesis (Chapters 12, 20, 26). As I said, we do know from fragmentary records that adopting one's wife as an official sister was a custom in the part of Mesopotamia Abram left when he moved to Canaan. So, this is an example where knowledge of the background from which the Bible story emerged can hint at meaning which is not explicitly contained in the text. Yet, I must emphasize that it is only a hint. About most of these things we can't be sure.

The main reason I selected the 12th chapter for detailed discussion is that it points to one of the momentous events in human history -- the emergence of monotheism out of a culture in which multiple gods had been worshipped. The key passage expressing the importance of this change occurs in the second part of the third verse: "and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." Up till that point, we might think that what's going on is one more god trying to set up his own little territory. But then we get the striking words that tell us this is not just a local matter, but one that will come to benefit everyone on earth.

The implications of monotheism are tremendous, and when we comprehend them, we begin to see that they affect every feature of human life. If there is a single source of creativity, knowledge, power, and goodness rather than multiple and, perhaps, conflicting sources, then everything one does needs to be oriented towards that single source. This does not mean going around in a moony daze, singing hymns every second. Rather it means taking the whole of ultimate meaning into account in shaping one's existence.

The story I told you about the Lebanese army officer is just one example of how belief in a single source of good can run up against the practicalities of the world. Throughout the Bible, we will see the "world" as symbolic of practical shrewdness set against the word of God, as it comes to us through the prophets and Jesus. In fact, you might say that the theme of the Bible is the world versus the word. And throughout, also, the Bible is challenging every person to choose.

A topic we didn't get around to yesterday is the danger of monotheism, which is obviously very great. When there is only one system, then there's no place else to go. That has struck many thinkers as a stifling condition, and that is why in philosophy, pluralism continues to be espoused as against the unity of power and knowledge. Both the danger and the benefit of monotheism are themes we'll continue to discuss as we go through the course.

Then, of course, there's the big question of all: "Is monotheism the truth?" You'll have to answer that for yourself.

September 18, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: 1st Samuel

The institution of the monarchy in Judah and Israel is a complex topic which could take us a whole semester and still be far from exhausted. As we zip through, fixing only a few events in our minds, we need to remember that the story of disparate tribes in an unsettled land coming to recognize a single ruler is not easily told.

I chose to discuss Samuel's warning about the dangers of a centralized kingdom because that's a theme which reoccurs throughout the Bible, and throughout Western history. That power corrupts has become such a cliche with us we almost forget that it's true. Samuel's word to the Israelites is a reminder that a truly wise people would neither need nor want centralized rule. They would govern themselves by the laws of righteousness, and, therefore, be free of the laws of force. It is also a statement that as the people decline in their loyalty to good behavior, the more a king and government will be set over them.

God's attitude here is clear. The people are fools, and only because they are fools should they be granted their desire for a king. To do as other nations do is the path of folly (for further confirmation of this message, read Exodus 23:23-24 and Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

Careful consideration of Samuel's warning should also help us recognize that all political science is derived from theories of human nature. The question here is whether people are by nature the sort of creatures who require a dominating government? Or, are they capable of moral action, in which case they can learn to behave towards one another reasonably and not have to be governed by force. Is reason an option for political existence? That's the challenge the Hebrew scriptures ask us to confront.

The answer the scriptures deliver is that reason is an option only when it grows out of worship of the single, all-powerful source of truth. Almost all social questions, at least in our Western dialogue, eventually revert back to the existence of god.

The Bible has proven to be effective in raising these questions because it deals with them not abstractly, but through stories. Stories are interesting teaching devices not only because they help people remember, but because they offer the possibility of various interpretations. Each reader takes his or her personal experience into account in deciding what a story says. We can't be perfectly sure about the meaning of a story, and therefore we always have to allow for the possibility that somebody else's reading is as good as ours. In a way, we might say that the story is the pre-eminent teaching mode for advancing freedom and democracy.

The Bible, of course, is the richest repository of stories we have. It is full of stories wonderful in themselves that are made even more rewarding because they have been used as models down the ages. The Bible stories are such an important literary resource that mature reading is impossible for anyone who's not familiar with them. The Bible is one of those books that needs to be read even if one cares nothing for it in itself because of its effect on subsequent traditions.

The story of David and Goliath, which we discussed last Wednesday, is a classic example of the Bible's function as literary foundation. It's hard to imagine a story about an underdog which doesn't draw on some aspect of the David-Goliath encounter. In it we see the heroic myth laid out in detail -- the the menace to community, the facing of seemingly impossible odds, self-confident courage, belief in something larger than oneself, and a gift made to one's companions.

We'll continue to concentrate on these stories, asking ourselves how they function as archetypes, how they have influenced our cultural tradition, and what relevance they have to us in ordinary life. The curious thing about archetypal stories is that they are far more powerful aids to learning than they seem to be at first glance. When one gets them firmly in mind, and develops the habit of using them to think about current situations, he or she has gained a key to cultural understanding.

September 21, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: 2nd Samuel

One thing I failed to note in class is that David's dalliance with Bathsheba is made possible by his new role as non-combatant. At this stage in his career, he can stay at home, in the center of his court, and not have to go out and lead his armies. That he can "send" for Bathsheba as he does indicates a web of officials and servants who do his bidding. But, of course, any time one is at the center of a web, then word of his actions gets around. David has come a long way from the simple shepherd boy who personally vanquished the enemies of his people. He's successful now, and as it often the case, he finds it much harder to deal with success than he did with adversity.

If we let our imaginations flow into the story, we can see how difficult it has become for him to resist temptation, and to live according to the strict morals of the prophets. Why shouldn't he take a woman he wants? He's the king. He inhabits a world where full enjoyment of power is the norm, and where the powerful are expected to behave ruthlessly, even brutally. This is another example of the Biblical theme -- the world versus the word, and how hard it is to remember the word when the world surrounds you and catches you up.

The basic message of the world is, "Why not?" "If you can have it, why not?"

I wish we had had time to discuss the story of Joab, David's nephew and for a long time the commander of his army. He is one of the classic examples in all of literature of looking for the main chance and seizing it ruthlessly when it appears. We might ask why David allowed him to get away with his murderous deeds and to continue in authority throughout his reign. The answer is simple: power. Joab through his own ability, and his willingness to act, even in the most extreme situations, had made himself very powerful, so much so that the king didn't dare to move against him. Also, Joab was, in a sense, loyal to David. It seems not to have been a loyalty of the heart, but rather one of calculation. Yet, it was effective, at times. And David was willing to make use of it.

David's relationship with Joab points to the truth that men will often collaborate for years, even though there's bad blood between them. Again, if we use our imaginations, we can see the numerous times when the the two men must have been together, at feasts, and banquets, and ceremonies, giving the appearance of perfect solidity. There's something sickening about that kind of association, and yet we find that the world demands it of us. The world will not allow us the luxury of always picking our confederates from among those we respect or admire.

It's interesting that in David's case, he was willing to bear the taint of Joab in order to make use of him, but that he couldn't stand the thought of bequeathing that kind of service to his son. On his deathbed, he reminded Solomon of Joab's sins, and gives him this very wary piece of advice: "Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace" (1st Kings, 2:6). In other words, pick your time, but don't let Joab get much older.

Solomon shows his astuteness by acting on the advice quickly. We can read a good deal of family history into his decision. As a boy growing up, he must have seen what sort of man Joab was, and may well have made up his mind what to do even before he got his father's final testament.

The story of Joab is fascinating, and would make a good topic for a paper, especially if one is interested in tracing the ups and downs of a ruthless military career.

September 26, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: The Gospels

The mysteries surrounding the four "gospel" texts are some of the most perplexing in all literature, and are the source of speculation that will probably go on as long as our civilization persists. There are, however, several facts about the gospels that are fundamental to any reading and need to be always kept in mind.

The first is that the gospels emerged out of an oral tradition which had been maintained for several decades by people who believed not only that Jesus was the son of God, but also that the end of the world was imminent. The purpose of the oral tradition was not to preserve an accurate biography of Jesus. It was rather to proclaim the news of who Jesus was and what relation he had to the coming end of time. Consequently, we can't read the gospels as ordinary biographies. They are not concerned with historical sequence, nor do they dwell on the social position that Jesus occupied. Neither of those subjects was important to them.

Virtually everything we know about the gospels and the events they describe comes from the books themselves. There is little external evidence. In the minds of the gospel writers, the life of Jesus was the most momentous event in history. In the worldly intellectual climate in which his life took place, it was of no consequence. This means we have to rely on internal evidence to come to whatever conclusions we reach.

The majority of scholars who have studied the books believe that Matthew, Mark, and Luke are closely related and use common material. This is why these three are called the "synoptic gospels" ("synoptic" defined as referring to various accounts from the same point of view). John is so different from the others that most scholars believe it was written independently of them, though some have argued that the writer of John had access to Luke.

There is a near concensus that Mark is the earliest of the gospels and that it was written sometime between A.D. 65 and 75, shortly after the death of Peter. Arguments about when it occurred within that decade turn on interpretations of the thirteenth chapter, in which Jesus predicts the destruction of the Temple. The Temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The question is, did the writer know of the destruction when he constructed his narrative?

Matthew and Luke were written late in the First Century, probably a generation after Mark. They came at a time when Mark was already an "established text" within the community of believers. Therefore, their writers must have wanted to include something of the oral tradition that Mark left out, or to give a different emphasis to some of the events Mark described. An effective way to examine the different purposes of the three gospels is to look at their accounts of the same incident. A good place to begin is the description of Jesus's temptation after he has been baptised (Mark 1:13, Matthew 4:1-11, and Luke 4:1-13). Another revealing comparison is offered by the story of the demoniac of Gerasa (Mark 5:1-20, Matthew 8:28-34, and Luke 8:26-39). These comparisons, by the way, are good topics for papers.

Though we read with this history in mind, we need principally to confront the text for the pure literary experience, to see what it says to us and what we can make of it. For me, the strongest literary effect is the startling modernness of Jesus. He emerges out of a stiff background of ceremonial thinking and speaks to the reader in words anybody can understand. The devout would say this is because Jesus speaks to all ages and not just to his own time. Whatever one thinks of that, most honest readers will admit that there's a strange power in his straight-forwardness. Christianity has been criticized, particularly by modern Nietzscheans, as a religion for slaves and peasants. Yet there's nothing supplicatory in Jesus. He doesn't beg anyone to believe or follow him. He simply speaks what he believes to be the truth. And he does it with a supreme self-confidence.

There's a quality of intelligence in all great literary figures (whether or not they are based on historical characters) which, for a while at least, compels our belief. What they say, in the context of their saying it, makes sense. And we know that they are right. Jesus in the gospels has this quality to a high degree. If one doesn't feel it, then there is probably some difficulty in the reading. It may be simply that the text is appealing to something that's not there, or that is insufficiently developed. We often find that great texts teach us about the latter. They show us what is undeveloped in ourselves.

Jesus makes this point over and again in the parables. There has to be something in the recipient in order for the seed to take hold (Matthew 13:1-30). This is an important point for both education and literary criticism. It doesn't matter how good the words are (they may even be divine!) if the reader is too undeveloped to receive them, nothing will happen. The task of education is to create a receiving network, so that powerful lessons have a chance to sprout and flourish.

I suspect it's this warning that's at the core of the controversies about Jesus and his message. He and it are wonderfully open and comforting. But they surround a nucleus of perfect hardness. If there's not an elemental desire -- to learn, to grow, to get better -- then nothing can be done, and the person who lacks it is essentially lacking everything. There seems to be no way to give it to the person who doesn't have it (Matthew 25:29).

Those of you who are psychologically oriented should tell us someday about the motivational effect of such a thesis.

October 3, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: The Sermon on the Mount

In scholarly interpretations about the differences among the three synoptic gospels, the Sermon on the Mount is often cited as an example of Matthew's concern to show that Christian doctine does not cancel the Law (5:17), but rather asks one to go beyond it, and by going beyond, to fulfill it. Consequently, chapters 5, 6, and 7 can be seen as a preachment of excess. The counsel they give leads one well beyond what any earthly code of behavior can reasonably expect.

We should always keep in mind that the early Christians believed that the world of historical strife was about to end, and the Kingdom of God to be ushered in. Therefore, much of Jesus's teaching on morality, and particularly the teaching in this sermon, applies to behavior in the Kingdom more than it does to behavior in the historic era.

The question of what is meant by the Kingdom of God must intrigue any careful reader of the Gospels. Clearly, it is a goal, a condition we want to reach. But is it to be reached here on earth, or must it be postponed to a life hereafter? I don't suppose we can know, for certain, what it meant in the minds of first century Christians. After decades, when history kept cranking along, interpretations grew up that set the Kingdom of God in the afterlife. And, then, more recently, when people began to get squeamish about believing in the afterlife, it was interpreted psychologically, as a state of peace and fulfillment within the soul.

If we take the Gospels at face value, the most likely interpretation is that Jesus was calling people to a radically different mode of behavior which he hoped would begin right away. But it's also clear that he comprehended the heroic action required to bring the Kingdom into being. It was not just a matter of everybody getting nice all of a sudden, and starting to mind his manners.

I mentioned in class the wonderful humanity of this message, but also its hardness. Both of these hit us with a crystaline simplicity, and both must be remembered if we're to understand the subsequent history of Christianity. People being as they are, they tend to recall the soft side of the Christian message, and to forget the adamantine statement that those who refuse to understand will be lost. Often you will hear people equating the Sermon on the Mount with the beatitudes, forgetting that the latter make up only the first part of the fifth chapter.

The beatitudes are followed by a number of remarkably tough statements. By the time we get to the seventh chapter we're told, in no uncertain terms, that the world doesn't guarantee us safety:

> Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

In this course we're not dealing with Christianity as an organized system of thought, but rather trying to get a beginning grasp of the nature and setting of Christianity's foundational documents. Yet, we can't ignore the subsequent history, because we know that these documents came to be the basis for powerful, world-molding institutions. It's not uncommon to hear laments about how easy everything would be if people would just pay attention to the Gospels. But even the most cursory glance at these writings show that they do not offer easy answers. They are complex, they are subtle, and even after they have been the object of a lifetime of study, they don't reveal themselves completely. So, it's no wonder that institutional attempts to follow the Gospels have involved people in tremendous controvesies.

For me, the Sermon on the Mount is a fitting introduction to the preachments of Paul, and particularly to his exclamation in the eleventh chapter of Romans: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

To the seeming paradoxes of Paul's counsels, we'll turn next.

October 4, 1988

To: Students, I. C. 211

From: John Turner

Subject: Paul's Letter to the Romans

I felt a little frustrated when we finished our discussion yesterday. We made only the sketchiest beginning in addressing the text. I suppose that was inevitable. The epistle to the Romans is one of the more perplexing documents in world literature. And it is especially hard to understand without a grounding in Christian theology.

Perhaps that makes for a good starting point. Most readers don't feel that the Gospels are hard to understand. They do, of course, have their mysteries. But the fundamental message, which is essentially moral, can be grasped easily. With Paul, it's different. On the surface, the same moral message is being conveyed. Yet, that's not the main implication. Paul is not primarily concerned with telling us how to be good, but rather with how to be saved. And when we reach the notion of salvation, we're into something deeply theological.

The theological character of Paul's letters has caused many commentators to regard him as the founder of the Christian Church. Jesus taught with the kind of authority that didn't require a theological underpinning. Whereas with Paul we have a far more anxious consciousness, one which feels compelled to pursue every philosophical nuance to its conclusion. When one does that, he offers more room for institutional interpretation, which is what worldly organizations thrive upon.

Jesus in his lifetime didn't build an organization. Yet, when he was gone, and could no longer speak face to face with his followers, they began to feel the need for a system. And in Paul, they found one of the great system-makers of all time.

At the heart of his system is a puzzle, one of those questions that can never really be answered, but which we can't stop asking. Do we worship God because he is God, or do we worship God because he is good? The latter part of the question implies some source of goodness independent of God, and that Paul was eager to refute. Yet, if we dismiss any ability to measure or even to wonder about God's actions, then we run into the problem of accepting everything that happens as good, simply because God, being all-powerful, must have allowed it to happen. Yet nobody, no matter how hard he tries can believe that everything that happens is good.

So, where does that leave us? Or, more to the point, where did it leave Paul?

He worked hard to solve this mystery, and whether he succeeded must be left to each reader's judgment. For myself, I don't think he did. Yet, in the process of trying he created some concepts that have been at the heart of the Christian debate ever since.

When we look at the eleventh chapter of Romans, we find Paul saying: "So too at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise, grace would no longer be grace." In other words, God choses people, not on the basis of their goodness, but for reasons known only to himself. These he causes to be receptive to his message, regardless of their previous disposition (remember Paul himself on the road to Damascus).

On the other hand, he hardens the heart of some, again for reasons known fully only to himself, but, presumably because he has some use in mind for them, some use that relates to the salvation of those he has elected.

When we go on to verse 22 of the same chapter, we find Paul warning: "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity towards those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off."

Here, there is an implication of human choice, but it has been preceded by God's choice, which, in ordinary logic, has made the human choice inevitable, and, therefore, no choice at all.

Paul recognizes the difficulty of this explanation, and that's why he says, in verse 33: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!"

By introducing the notion of God's remnant into Christian theology (he, of course, was drawing on texts from the Old Testament), Paul sets up the ongoing desire to identify oneself with that remnant, and to regard all those who are not of the remnant as being cast into the outer darkness. Once you have that dichotomy, you have the potential of heresy and terrible institutional conflict. In a way, it was a grievous heritage. But it arose from Paul's honorable attempt to confront the problem of evil in a world ruled by God. And, in trying to face that problem, he was doing what every religion must do.

This is an over-simplified explanation of only one of the central problems presented to us by Paul's letters. The only worth it can possibly have lies in helping convince you of how carefully these texts must be read, and how long a time it takes to puzzle them out. In that sense Paul's letters are representative of the rest of the Bible. It repays long and careful reading. It does not offer much to the person who expects to skim.

October 10, 1988

TO: Students, I. C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Historical Background to The Odyssey

The puzzles of who actually wrote The Odyssey, and whether it was written by the person who wrote The Iliad, and what historic period the two poems describe, are generally grouped under the single title of "the Homeric question." It has not been answered definitely, and it probably never will be.

If you want to read up on what is known, you might go first to a collection in the "European Problem Studies," titled Homer's History: Mycenaean or Dark Age?, edited by C. G. Thomas (Krieger Publishing Company). What you'll find is that the experts disagree. Experts almost always disagree, because if facts are established so clearly as to cause no controversy, we don't need experts.

The question in the title asks whether Homer's descriptions of political and social life in The Odyssey apply to the Mycenaean civilization of roughly 1400-1200 B. C., or do they apply to the culture that came afterwards, from which we have no written records, that took up the years from roughly 1100 to 800 B.C.?

The answer seems to be that they don't apply to either, at least not to an extensive degree. As near as we can tell, the civilization of Achilles, Agamemnon, Menelaus, Priam, Hector, and Odysseus never existed in history but, rather, was a literary creation.

The only part of Homer that seems to have come from Mycenaean times is the geography. Cities did exist at the places Homer names, including a city at Troy, which was destroyed by a siege sometime around 1225 B.C.. But they were not the sort of cities described in the Odyssey. They were more similar to the settlements found in Mesopotamia a millenium earlier, small urban kingdoms ruled not by warrior chieftains but by a priestly bureaucracy, whose principal function was to keep close account of all property for the maintenance of taxation.

No one knows, for sure, about the social organization during the "Dark Ages." It was probably a less-organized and rougher system. And, perhaps, the rulers were more likely to play a personal role in the raids and wars. Yet, clearly, they were not persons resembling very closely the heroes of Homer. When the cities of Greece emerge again into the light of history about the beginning of the seventh century B.C., they had political systems that were derived from complex tribal organizations, which led to councils of aristocrats, and complicated legal networks.

We have to conclude that though Homer may have drawn on some features of Mycenaean life, which had reached him through an oral tradition, and may have used some of the practices of the times just preceding his own, his world is, for the most part, an imaginative creation.

Does this mean it has no pertinence for history? I don't think so. Whatever the relationship of these two poems to the actual conditions of life in the ages that came before them, there was clearly something in them that seized the Greek imagination, and that caused them to be formative elements of the later Greek character.

If we had more time, I would ask you to read Werner Jaeger's great three volume work titled, _Paideia_: _The Ideals of Greek Culture_. In it, he includes the best discussion I have seen of the nearly untranslatable Greek word: "arete." The nearest we can come to it with a single English word is "excellence." Yet, it meant far more than what we mean by that term. In ancient Greece, if a person had arete, it meant that he had the ability to function courageously and intelligently in any circumstance of life. Modern culture does not make a close connection between courage and intelligence. We think they are very different qualities, and, in some ways, nearly opposed. But, in classical Greek culture, they were so intimately related as to be almost indistinguishable.

In _The Iliad_ and _The Odyssey_, we find the primitive root of arete. During the fifth and fourth centuries, arete came to have what we would call more intellectual qualities than it had in Homer. But, no matter how far it moved from the simple world of Homer's heroes, it continued to reflect the core meaning that it had for them. One might say that when all the Homeric meaning of arete had been washed out of the term, the classical age of Greece died. But, for a very long time, it formed the heart of a great civilization.

It is a wonderful thing to have a word that everyone understands and respects, and which incorporates the fundamental virtues of a culture. It offers the members of that culture opportunities that other people are denied. It's even more wonderful to have great books that show the meaning of that word in action. That's what the Homeric epics were, and that's why they have lasted so long, and have had the impact they have had. That is also why they are unlikely to fade from human memory. They speak to a quality that all human societies need. And when they don't have it in sufficient strength, they need to be working toward it. In my opinion, that's the condition we find ourselves in today.

October 12, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Literary Aspects of The Odyssey

Probably nothing is more characteristic of Homer than the sets of paired adjectives which tend to be used over and again. This is a device characteristic of works derived from an oral tradition, in which the repetitions served as aids to memory. But after long use, they take on a value that is more than utilitarian. They become guideposts that add an archaic charm, and that are pleasurably anticipated by the reader.

The various terms used for the sea are a good example of the device -- "the salt immortal sea," "the fathomless unresting sea," "the flawless brimming sea," and perhaps most frequently, the "wine dark sea."

A telling feature of a classic, and perhaps the one that most testifies to a book's having reached classic status, is that it becomes a kind of rule to itself, and sets its own standards which apply to nothing else. Certainly, if modern authors used paired adjectives in the way Homer uses them, they would be accused of bad writing. Imagine seeing over and over again, "the darkened lowering sky," or "the golden fertile fields." Write that kind of stuff nowadays and you would get the red pencil. But, in Homer, it works.

The reason I chose Robert Fitzgerald's translation is that he seems to come close to the flavor of the Greek poetry while at the same time producing verse that is easily understood by the modern reader. Most translators have despaired of putting Homer into verse, and, instead have fallen back on prose, which has the virtue of telling the story clearly, but loses much of the feel of it. If you should want to consult a good prose translation, I recommend those by E. V. Rieu and Richard Lattimore.

As I said in class, the aspect of Fitzgerald's translation I like least is his decision to change the traditional spelling of proper nouns in order to approach the sound of Greek pronunciation: Oidipous for Oedipus, Kirke for Circe, Telemakhos for Telemachus, et cetera. It's clear why he did it, but it seems to me the loss in easy reader recognition is greater than the gain in sound. Even so, once you get used to the new spellings, they're not a great bother.

The richness of The Odyssey poses a problem for the reader. It's a moderately long book, and it tells an engaging story. So, the tendency is to rush along paying attention simply to what happens. Yet, we should not forget that it is a poem, not a work of prose. It repays being read with the care a poem demands. Even so, the rush of a modern academic schedule pushes the student to read more quickly than one would in addressing a short lyric poem. That's the practicality of the matter, and I think we have to face it.

It seems to me that a good compromise is to read most of the book as you would a novel, but to pick a small number of passages for careful study and read them over and again (I hope you recognize that no poem has been really read until it has been read at least a dozen times).

I like, for example, the first four lines of Book III:

> The sun rose on the flawless brimming sea
> into a sky all brazen -- all one brightening
> for gods immortal and for mortal men
> on ploughlands kind with grain.

I think that's a wonderful little lyric poem all by itself, and worth much contemplation. And, for me, the finest thing about it is the final statement, that the ploughlands are "kind with grain." If you want to understand the power of words, think how the poem would have been diminished had "kind" been replaced with something which at first glance might have seemed adequate, something like "rich," or "full," or "ripe." The poem would have been transformed from what it is into mere pleasantness. And in poetry, the merely pleasant doesn't make it.

I hope you'll find some passages that have a comparable effect on you, and bring them to our attention during class discussions.

October 17, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Odysseus and the Greek Spirit

The Greeks prided themselves on being different from other men, whom they regarded as barbarians. The main difference they saw between themselves and others was an absence of peasant slavishness in themselves. Other men, they thought, were willing to be ruled and not to think. For themselves, they wanted to know everything, and this they accepted as the essence of freedom.

That curiosity was the prime Greek attribute was widely accepted in the classical world. In the Acts of the Apostles, we are told that when Paul visited Athens, he was taken by the philosophers to the Areopagus and quizzed about his new teaching. And then, the narrator explains, "Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new." (Acts, 17:21).

When you compare Odysseus to the other heroes of Homer's epics, you'll see that he manifests curiosity to a higher degree than anyone else. It's hard to imagine men like Achilles, or Agamemnon, or Ajax outside of the highly stylized epic of battle. But Odysseus we can imagine being anywhere. And wherever he was, he would be poking his nose into things.

Sometimes, his curiosity gets him into trouble. Recall why he decided to go to the Cyclops' island. He and his men had feasted on the goats which abounded on the neighboring islet, so they had no need to go there for supplies. Yet, the day afterwards, Odysseus called his men together and said:

> Old shipmates, friends,
> the rest of you stand by; I'll make the crossing
> in my own ship, with my own company,
> and find out what the mainland natives are --
> for they may be wild savages, and lawless,
> or hospitable and god-fearing men.

There is an almost anthropological tone to the undertaking, although Odysseus says later in Book IX that he also hopes he might get something from the natives. In that, he exhibits an entrepreneurial, or at least a mercantile, spirit that also marks his off from his fellow heroes.

Because we have lived in a culture derived at least in part from this Greek spirit, it is easy to forget how unusual the desire to learn something new is. Even in the most active culture, most people won't do much to learn new things. They are far more interested in the familiar and comfortable.

Down the ages Odysseus has symbolized this Greek spirit of curiosity and adventure. Just a few days ago, my daughter came home from the fifth grade to say that she had been enrolled in a project called "the Odyssey of the Mind." I asked her if her teachers had told her what "Odyssey" meant. She said no, but that she thought it must mean something about discovery. That's how names perpetuate themselves even beyond their origins.

Tennyson captured this quality vividly in "Ulysses," the poem I read to you last week:

> And this gray spirit yearning in desire
> To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
> Beyond the utmost bound of human thought

And then, later in the poem, with his famous summation:

> and though
> We are not now that strength which in old days
> Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

It's possible to question the wisdom of following knowledge beyond the utmost bounds of human thought. Some critics argue that an unconsidered devotion to technological innovation is leading to damnation. But one can scarcely doubt that the spirit of Odysseus, which reveals so much about the ancient Greeks, would always have us look around the next corner.

October 19, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John R. Turner

SUBJECT: The Odyssey Long Range

I've come across a number of studies over the past several years which indicate that the long-range retention of lessons learned by college students is very slight. Some researchers even go so far as to argue that college students retain virtually nothing of what they learn in their courses.

I trust that's not the case, but I have to recognize that much of the material we discuss never becomes firmly seated in the brain. So, I think it's worthwhile to say what I think you ought to remember, five or ten years from now, about our study of The Odyssey.

First, I hope you would recall the timeframe out of which The Odyssey emerged. The poem speaks about events which occurred during the Mycenean Age, roughly 1400 - 1200 B.C., with the siege of Troy taking place in the latter years of that era. We have no evidence, though, that there was any written version of the tale until more than four hundred years later. Homer is presumed to have lived during the eighth century B.C.

Second, you should remember the basic "Homeric question." Was there such a person as Homer? Did he write either or both of the two works ascribed to him? Do The Iliad and The Odyssey show internal evidence of having been written by the same person? You probably won't remember many of the specific arguments put forward in answer to these questions, but you should recognize that there has been immense scholarly effort in response to them, and that a great literature exists on the subject, readily available to you in any good library.

Third, you should recall the discussions we had about the problems of translation, and remember that every translation is the result of choices which determine its areas of strength and weakness. Are we interested primarily in clear transmission of the plot? Do we want to approach the poetic flavor of the original work? Do we want language that's familiar to the modern reader? Do we want diction that comes as close as possible to the original style. The answers to these decide what kind of translation we're going to have. I hope also that you'll remember that we illustrated these issues by looking at the passage from the eleventh book, in which Achilles tells Odysseus that being alive in the most humble state is better than being king of the dead.

Fourth, you should remember the basic story, and its division into four parts:

1) Athena decides that Odysseus has been kept from home long enough, and goes to Ithaca to help Telemachus.
2) Calypso gets the word from the Oylmpians, and releases Odysseus from his captivity. He endures great hardships in getting to the land of the Phaiakians.
3) Odysseus is warmly received by Nausikaa, and her father King Alkinoos. He tells the story of his adventures between the time of leaving Troy and arriving on Calypso's island.
4) Odysseus returns to Ithaca, and deals with the suitors who have been bedeviling his wife Penelope.

Fifth, you should remember that we read the Robert Fitzgerald translation, and that he tries through modern poetic technique to recapture the flavor of the Greek epic poems.

Sixth, you should recall that The Iliad and The Odyssey were the principle material used in the education of Greek youth for almost a thousand years, and that they formed the educational foundation for the Golden Ages of Greece in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C.

Seventh, you should remember the character of Odysseus. He was different from the other Greek heroes, more prudent, more inquisitive, more willing to admit his own physical needs. In short, he is a more human hero than we commonly encounter in the early myths. For that reason, he has been the subject of far more controversy than any other of the Mycenean leaders.

Eighth, you need to recollect our discussions about the sort of literature that emerges out of an oral tradition. Remember that it must rely on story, and that it uses the story to make its points. It also requires certain stylistic devices, such as the often-repeated paired adjectives, which give it its archaic charm.

Ninth, you should continue to recognize the great formative power this work has had in shaping the imagination of subsequent cultures. I hope you'll recall that we read Tennyson's "Ulysses" aloud in class, and used the Tennysonian interpretation as a means of discussing Odysseus's driving need to discover new worlds.

Finally, and probably most important, I would want you to recall the fresh sensuality of the poem, and how it conveys the flavor of a world that's still young and full of the spirit of adventure. I think that's what has kept people reading The Odyssey over all these years, and I suspect that's what will take you back to it as you move along in life. Read carefully, there's scarcely any book that tells us more of what it means to be alive than The Odyssey.

Ten little points aren't much, I know. But if you'll get them firmly in mind, you'll find you've constructed a framework that will add to itself almost naturally as you gain in experience. There is a great wealth of allusion to Homer alive in this culture which simply washes past those who don't have the basic framework to take it in. But when you do possess that structure, you have a tool that will help you learn far more than you can expect to learn in this single course.

October 24, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Reading Plato

The Republic is a deceptive book. Its form as simple dialogue, and the rather ordinary language it employs, can lead one, upon a first reading, to consider it a boring recitation of peculiar opinions. But if one comes to that conclusion, he's making a big mistake.

The Republic raises most of the fundamental questions of philosophy. I would go so far as to say that if a person knows clearly what he thinks about all the questions addressed by Socrates in The Republic, he has completed the philosophic task and raised himself to a new order of intellect. So far as I can tell, no one has yet got that far.

A barrier to understanding philosophic books is the common assumption that they offer answers to the big questions. Of course, in a sense they do. But they are not often answers that satisfy anybody other than the philosophers who wrote them. When readers discover that the answers a book contains are nothing they can accept, they sometimes dismiss the book as useless. When they do that, they miss the value of great philosophy.

The Republic is a fine example of how a book can be magnificent, and still, from the point of view of many sensible people, utterly wrong-headed. I suppose we might have somebody in this class who will agree with everything Socrates says. But if we do, I think we had better watch out for that person, and be very skeptical if he should ever run for political office. Most of us will find Socrates, at times, wrong, and silly, and immoral. Yet, that's no reason not to pay attention to what he has to say.

For me, one of the chief uses of the Platonic dialogues is that they show me how sloppy my own thought is. Over and again, I find Socrates saying things I know are absurd. But when I turn to the task of saying why they're absurd, I discover that I'm tongue-tied. Obviously, if I know something is wrong, but can't say why, then my thoughts are not in order. I know of no exercise that better helps get them in order than struggling with the foolish arguments Socrates makes so cleverly.

So many people have had this experience that an alternative interpretation of Plato has grown up, one that argues he doesn't really mean what he says. Perhaps he sometimes disputes in the way he does just to show us the wrongness of the positions he ostensibly advances. I wish I were a good enough scholar to know what I think of that interpretation. But, with respect to reading Plato, I can at best call myself a student. I hope mainly to learn something each time I read him, and I'm so far from reaching definitive conclusions that I don't even want to think about that yet.

Perhaps I am a slightly more experienced reader than some of you, and that may allow me to point out a few things that will help you along. With respect to certain of the underlying concepts, such as the theory of forms, the four cardinal virtues, the training of the philosopher kings, and the allegory of the cave, I've had a sufficient struggle to develop a few ideas, and I hope these will aid our conversation. Yet, the basic fact is that we're all students together with Plato, and we each have a responsibility to help the others to a better understanding.

A fundamental supposition of the dialogic search for truth is that every statement can be of use. So don't be afraid to speak up. Your thought, the one that you're most doubtful about, may be the key that will help everyone towards better comprehension.

October 25, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Plato and Intellectual Courage

In The Republic, Socrates lists courage as one of the four cardinal virtues, along with wisdom, self-discipline, and justice. To the average person, that probably wouldn't be surprising, although courage is a virtue that gets short shrift in most so-called practical discussions of what it takes to get along in the world today. However, his definition of courage might not be so readily accepted. He calls it the ability, under all circumstances, to hold onto the proper opinion about what is to be feared.

It requires only a little thought, however, to discern what he means. Take a soldier in battle. Presumably he has two things to fear: getting hurt and disgracing himself. The standard view of courage lies in remembering, no matter how tough the going gets, that disgrace is more to be feared than death. Of course, in order for this example to make sense, one has to believe that the disdain one would suffer for running away really does constitute disgrace. Otherwise, this kind of courage becomes simply a version of stupidity. Be that as it may, the example serves to explain how Plato links courage with a valid estimation of fear.

When we come to intellectual courage, the question of what ought to be feared gets more difficult. It's clear that The Republic places a high value on intellectual courage. The book has numerous passages praising it. Yet the fear to which intellectual courage is linked isn't laid out succinctly. To discover it, we have to interpret.

It seems to me that understanding the disgrace accompanying a failure of intellectual courage is a key to comprehending what is meant by Platonism. But, even more important for our purposes, understanding this sort of disgrace can help us grasp the vital problems of our own time.

It's easy to see that intellectual disgrace does not entail the kind of public disdain one gets from failing a physical or political challenge. Socrates says explicitly, especially in the middle portions of Book VI, that the demands of philosophy are understood by very few people. Consequently, failure to maintain a steady search for truth won't normally be condemned. Furthermore, it is easy to fake intellectualism. Most who claim that pursuit, in any society, are really "second-rate interlopers" (page 291). Therefore, it's not hard to gain a reputation as big-deal thinker without ever paying the price for true intellectual courage.

So, if public disgrace is not involved in intellectual cowardice, what kind of disgrace is?

We get a hint of the answer when Socrates tells us that the genuine search for truth involves contemplating "all time and all reality." And, in a later passage, he says that this same search points towards "the highest form of knowledge," which is an understanding of the ultimate good. Expounding on his precise meaning here would require getting into the theory of forms, which I must leave for later. Yet, even without thorough explanation, we can see that he is alluding to what is often called the long view. He is expecting the person of intellectual courage to dismiss transient advantage and give thought to what is demanded by the full range of history.

Every society, if it not to decay, must have people who do this. Those who take up this lonely task are the genuine heroes.

And where is the disgrace? where is the fear that true courage always remembers? It is in knowing that you failed the ultimate challenge of all, the challenge of history. To the person who understands, nothing could be more terrible than that.

W.H. Auden captured much of that terror in a stanza of his tribute to William Butler Yeats:

> Intellectual disgrace
> Stares from every human face,
> And the seas of pity lie
> Locked and frozen in each eye.

The Platonic message is that humanity's purpose is fulfilled only through the courage to seek the truth. When that courage is lacking, all other goods crumble, and humanity's face becomes hard and hateful. I think that's what brings people back to Plato, despite the dubious social theory he spouts. And, of course, the hope that he might help a few students attain that courage is what makes Socrates a noble character. In my view, it's the same hope that motivates any teacher worth his salt.

October 30, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Questionable Arguments in The Republic

Probably no other great book has as many dubious arguments as Plato's Republic. These can be accounted for in a variety of ways. Plato's politics, and Plato's psychology are the two overarching reasons most often put forward to explain why he includes so much that's questionable. But, for me, the main issue about The Republic is not why it has so many weak arguments, but why, in spite of these, it remains such an engaging book.

The most fallacious portion of the argument involves the transition from the three necessary components of society to Plato's insistence about what this means with respect to the rule of justice. He says that society has to be made up of rulers, defenders, and those who produce the material goods of existence. One might argue that other functions are necessary, but there's nothing outrageous about the three Plato chooses. However, the derivation he makes from this tripartite division is at least questionable and, probably, just plain wrong.

He says that a given man must specialize in one of the three functions, and not meddle with the other two. He doesn't really argue this point; he just states it as though it were self-evident. It's clearly not self-evident, although I suppose one must admit to a certain logic in the principle of specialization. His next argument, however, is even more peculiar. He claims that people are divided naturally into classes best suited for each function. In other words, some people are born to govern, some are born to be soldiers, and some are born to produce the food, shelter and clothing necessary to physical life. This is almost certainly not true.

The whole thrust of the democratic experiment has been to insist that nobody is determined by his birth, but that, rather, people can make of themselves whatever they wish through personal choice within a free society. To Plato, that idea is not only mistaken, it's also disgusting.

Why disgusting? To answer, we have to turn to Plato's theory of psychology. He sees human life as a struggle between reason and appetite. The former leads to justice, and the latter leads to miserable self-indulgence and selfishness. A world ruled by appetite would be Plato's version of hell.

Reason, in his view, can be reached only through a long and vigorous education designed to allow the student to perceive the ultimate realities, those forms which exist in an unchanging world beyond the reach of human desire. For him it is clear that only a few people will have the ability and stamina to carry through with such an educational program. Therefore, only a few will ever reach the state whereby they are ruled by reason.

If society permits everyone to chase his own wishes in accord with his appetite, then the world will be a mess, ruled not by reason but rather by the accidents of grasping selfishness.

If Plato could return to life, and watch the evening news for about a week, he would undoubtedly say that that's exactly the kind of world we've got. He would surely be horrified. And, most of us, watching the news, feel just about the same way.

Though we are committed to democractic solutions (and when I say "we," I mean most of the thoughtful persons in our society), we can still, feel that somehow we have missed the rewards of reason. And we long for them just as Plato did. I think that's why Plato can still be read with profit. We recognize him as a genuine seeker for reason. And though his conclusions often strike us as strange, and, sometimes, even horrible, the bond we feel in the search for reason holds him close to us.

Hunting for reason is a tricky business, and can sometimes lead us down dangerous paths. But I think it is one of the perennial longings of the human heart. We can scarcely be called human if we don't want to find reason.

People who search seriously seem always to make use of Plato. That's why, despite his doubtful answers, he remains a good intellectual companion. He convinces us that he wants the truth more than he wants any specific outcome. And, that's a rare desire.

November 2, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Socrates and Democracy

There can be little doubt that, in the traditional sense, Socrates was a foe of democracy. He was so convinced that reason came only after a long process of education and that only a few had the capability to carry through with that process, he couldn't imagine how the majority of people could ever have the reason demanded by good government.

The political journalist I.F. Stone has recently published a book which forcefully makes this point. Titled The Trial of Socrates, it argues that Athens had good reason to be disgusted with Socrates, since most of his arguments were scornful of the common citizens of the city. Although Stone says Athens was mistaken to go so far as to put Socrates to death, he believes that the leaders of the city had a more sensible understanding of political virtue than Socrates did.

Stone's argument, though it's engaging, and raises some points that do need consideration, demonstrates the problems of applying the beliefs of one era to another. Mr. Stone is such a strong believer in the virtues of liberal democracy he can't grasp the possibility that Socrates may have been more interested in pointing out certain truths about political life than he was in promoting any particular form of government.

It seems likely to me that a man with Socrates's cast of mind would always oppose the form of government in vogue in his own time. He has often been called a gadfly, and that's probably pretty much how he saw himself. He wasn't a comfortable person to have around, because he was always puncturing the illusions of those who believed they had figured out everything. But, to make him into a fascistic figure, as some critics have wanted to do, strikes me as excessive.

Recall our discussions in class. I asked if you would like being ruled by the 1% of the people who might make it through the sort of rigorous educational system Socrates proposed. Most of you said no. Then I asked if you liked the kind of political leaders our system is bringing forward. Again, you said no.

At that point, someone exclaimed that current politicians are frustrating because they never give straight answers nor tell the truth. So, I asked, why they don't tell the truth. And most of you answered, almost instantaneously, that if they did they wouldn't get elected.

Doesn't that mean that you're saying about the same thing Socrates said, that the majority of people lack the reason to select leaders who tell the truth? And, if that's what you think, why do you remain loyal to democratic values?

Socrates was trying to force people to ask themselves that very kind of question, to sort out the inconsistencies in their own positions. That was the intention behind his famous adage, that the unexamined life is not worth leading. Without going through the kind of conversation to which Socrates devoted his life, the average person will walk around a bundle of contradictions, never knowing really what he thinks. Yet, at the same time, this average guy is quick to act on the impulse of the moment. Socrates didn't believe that impulsive behavior of that stripe could ever lead to justice. And when we look at history, it's hard to disagree with him.

I doubt that we have enough solid information about 5th century Athens to know exactly what Socrates thought about practical politics. It would be interesting to know, but I don't think it would change dramatically the use to which modern readers put him. Socrates was a philosopher in the fundamental sense. He may also have been a political advocate. Yet, that is not what is important about him.

Consequently, though many of the positions he seems to take are in opposition to modern ideas of virtue, Socrates remains a sympathetic figure to most people who read him carefully. He shows us a man relentlessly in pursuit of the truth. Most of us, I think, are caught up in the faith that a person who sincerely seeks the whole truth is unlikely to do serious harm. Considering all the faiths that have been preached at humanity, that's not a bad one to hold. In any case, it continues to win for Socrates a pretty good press, even though he probably was not an exemplary democrat.

November 7, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Plato and Objectivism

For almost four hundred years the dominant theory of knowledge and truth has been fairly stable. It is Platonic in the rough sense that it presents a world of truth which exists independent of the knower, a world that is really there, whether or not anyone is observing it. The process used in discovering this truth is called the scientific method, which, though it often gets caught up in intricate detail, is in its essence fairly simple.

This comfortable notion, which has kept us busy for a long time trying to discover the so-called facts of nature, is being displaced. The most prestigious academic thinkers are now arguing that truth is not independent of the knower, or observer, and that knowledge is not something one gets, but, rather, something that one makes.

For the world of education, the difference between knowledge-getting and knowledge-making is tremendous. If affects everything we do. In shifting from the one to the other, the most striking change, it seems to me, is the impact it has on the way we choose, or choose not, to join groups and organizations. In the past, one's membership in a group was important, of course. But it did not have the comprehensive effect it will have if the new way of thinking comes to dominance.

If the truth exists somewhere outside any social construct, then one is free to seek it as an individual. He can make use of the theories of one group or another, but, finally, he can hope to come closer to it than anybody else. This is an exhilarating notion, but it is also extremely dangerous. It leaves open the possibility that a deranged person can claim to have found the truth, and such a belief can cause a person to act in severely anti-social ways.

If the truth is something made by humans, then one can make up his own if he wishes. But that would require a pathological egotism. The more likely occurrence is that one would choose his truth by choosing his group. Group truth-making has more force behind it than individual truth-making, and it also provides more security. The big problem with it is that it gives no place to stand outside a group in order to decide which one to join.

A lot of philosophical work is going forward nowadays to try to dump Platonism but to retain a portion of the assurance it offers. Nobody seems to want an unrestricted relativism, in which one theory is just as good as another. Yet the leading thinkers don't want to be bound down by the notion of absolute truth either. So they're trying to build a sort of responsible relativism, one in which the truth is made by groups, or traditions (which are groups operating over time), but in a system that allows us to test one group against another and say which one is best.

The most notable thinker I know who has been making this attempt recently is Ricard Rorty. His book, The Consequences of Pragmatism (1982), has been very influential, especially because it has reached a larger audience than just the academic philosophers. It's a readable book, and I recommend it to you as something you would not find incomprehensible.

Another philosopher who has received considerable attention lately is Alasdair MacIntyre, whose new book, Whose Justice, Which Rationality?, makes a similar argument, but comes at the problem from a conservative rather than a liberal starting point. It's interesting to me that Rorty and MacIntyre, who usually are considered opponents, seem to be approaching one another. That's testimony to the power of this new kind of relativism.

This move away from objectivity is far too complex for me to do anything more right now than to say it exists. I do hope, though, that you will keep Plato's allegory of the cave in mind as you see this issue argued in future years. This seemingly simple image has great illustrative power, and can help you reduce abstract arguments to manageable proportions.

My prediction is that what I have called responsible relativism is going to be the dominating thought pattern for the rest of our lives. I'm not too happy about that because I think it involves even more serious dangers than the rampant individualism of past centuries. Yet, I suppose we have to take the systems our era delivers to us and do the best we can with them. I myself would rather live in a time when everybody knew who God was and what he wanted us to do (I think). But that's not the kind of time we've got nowadays.

November 9, 1988

TO: Students, I. C. 211

FROM: John R. Turner

SUBJECT: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius: What kind of book is it?

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor from 161 till his death in 180, is often described as one of the most noble natures known to history. His reputation doesn't rest entirely on his meditations, but his leaving such a thorough record of his inward life has surely enhanced the fame that came to him from his public deeds.

He was well-loved, almost worshipped, during his own time. After his death, the citizens of the Empire remembered him as having been very nearly a saint. His sayings were passed from mouth to mouth, and busts of him were set up in Roman homes from the very outskirts of the Empire to the imperial city itself.

I guess the most striking thing about Marcus is that he seems to have brought his actions closely in line with his thoughts. That, in itself, is a rare feat in human history.

This book of his, which achieved world-wide fame, and up till a few decades ago was read more widely than it is now, is not, in the normal sense of the word a book at all. It was not written for anyone else to read. Rather, it is simply a collection of Marcus's thoughts, written down as they occurred to him during an extremely busy life.

He was not the sort of man who liked busy-ness. He had a quiet personality, and had he been able to choose exactly how to live, would have led a retiring life among his books and personal friends. But from the time he was seventeen years old, he was trained to become the head of the most awesome political system the world had known till that time (and some would argue, the most awesome political system known to history). It seems never to have occurred to him to shirk the duties of his office. And since he reigned during a time of severe threats to the borders of the Empire, he was forced to spend much of his life directing military campaigns. There has probably never been a less-soldierly man, or a better soldier.

The thoughts he jotted down in his commonplace books (ask yourself if you know what a commonplace book is, and, if you don't, go look it up) don't fall into a category which has much recognition in the academic world today. So much the worse for the contemporary academic world. I guess we are beginning, after a long and stupid lapse, to recognize the value of personal journals in learning. But we still don't have an accepted term for what was once called moral philosophy, and which was once at the center of the academic enterprise.

Moral philosophy, in this old-fashioned sense, was not systematic, or technical, philosophy. Nor was it simply a listing of rules of conduct. It was rather an attempt to use the ordinary language of everyday life to get at the pressing problems of human existence. It was partially explanation, and partly a statement of faith. And, its purpose was to give one a personal foundations for his own actions by clarifying what he stood for and what he thought.

The underlying idea behind this kind of philosophizing was the concept that if one got in the habit of recording his thoughts as he encountered the experiences life brought his way, he would, over time, begin to discern patterns which, when examined, would show him who he was. He would discover what he really cared about, what he really loved, and what he really could not stand. Most people probably think they know this about themselves, and most people are probably wrong.

In any event, Marcus Aurelius was convinced that one must do this if he were going to avoid spiritual degration, and, ultimately, misery. Only through the habitual examination of one's own thoughts can one bring himself into agreement with the ruling spirit of the world. And to Marcus, gaining that agreement between personal thought and ruling spirit was the only way to achieve peace and self-respect.

If you'll consider how this relates to our conversation about knowledge-gaining and knowledge-making, you'll see that Marcus was not exactly a modern character. I'm sure that's why he is not read as much now as he was a century ago. To my mind, that's all the more reason why we should pay attention to him.

November 10, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Stoicism

I was a little surprised to find that the word "stoic" was unfamiliar to you. I think it's in fairly common use, and appears as an ordinary entry in current dictionaries. The usage example given in The American Heritage Dictionary is from a comment by John F. Kennedy: "stoic resignation in the face of hunger."

In any case, it's normal meaning nowadays is relative indifference to pleasure or pain. That's a reasonable derivation from the philosophic movement, which began its formal phase when Zeno of Citium began his lectures on the Painted Porch or Stoa Poikile in Athens in 300 B.C.

By the time of Marcus Aurelius, stoicism was a well-developed philosphy with a long history. We can't say that he advanced it in any philosophic sense, but he may well have formulated its best known expression, particularly in its ethical and humanistic aspects (Formal stoicism also had a logic and a physics to which Marcus Aurelius paid relatively little attention).

The fundamental moral rule of Stoicism is that man should follow the law of nature. Implicit in that belief is the notion that nature is beneficent, that it offers a guidance which accords with human well-being. You'll recall that we talked one day in class about whether nature is friendly to us. Most of you didn't think it was. Rob Demchak was the only class member to say that he thought nature was on his side. So, you wouldn't be very good stoics -- and not only because of your attitude toward nature.

Taking the Stoic stance towards nature suggests a pantheism, i.e., the belief that God, or the spirit of good, is spread through every part of the creation rather than standing apart from it. In the Stoic literature this force for good is designated in a number of ways, all of which mean almost the same thing. Examples are: Creative Fire, reason or logos, reason of the world, soul of the world, law of nature, providence, destiny, and order.

The Encyclopedia of Philosophy posits the Stoic definition of God as "a rational spirit having itself no shape but making itself into all things."

The cardinal virtues of Stoicism are versions of the four appearing in most Classical systems, but each with a distinctive twist:

Intelligence: knowing what is good and bad.
Bravery: knowing what to fear and what not to fear.
Justice: knowing how to give everyone what belongs to him.
Self-control: knowing what impressions to accept, and what passions either to damp down or to extinguish.

Obviously, the virtue most closely associated with Stoicism is self-control. The reason the Stoics place so much emphasis on it is that it offers the way to autonomy. Only when a person is free of the fear of pain or the obsessions of pleasure can he be said to own himself, because then he is dependent on no one but himself and providence.

The problem with Stoicism, of course, is that it requires an inhuman composure, at a level nobody can sustain. Anthony Trollope captured this weakness succinctly in his novel Barchester Towers: "It is the same with our Stoics here, who would teach us that wealth, and worldly comfort and happiness on earth are not worth the search. Alas for a doctrine that can find no believing pupils and no true teachers!" In a way, the Meditations give us the same message. We constantly hear Marcus Aurelius lamenting that he has not been able to dismiss ignoble passions in the way that he would like.

On the other hand, Stoicism has lent itself to almost all subsequent systems of thought. We might say that it is an unobtainable but perennial philosophy (you can't live with it, entirely, but you can't live without it either). I see echoes of it continually in the contemporary media. Quentin Crisp, an English critic said in his book, Manners From Heaven, published just a couple years ago, that "low forms of life and the immature live in a constant state of self-centered turmoil." Certainly, that's a stoical sentiment.

Consequently, though Marcus Aurelius may strike us as being impossibly noble and frostily remote, he still has a message everyone requires in tough times. It's hard to imagine a life that won't need to draw on stoic composure at sometime in order to avoid either embarrassment or disgrace.

November 16, 1988

TO: Students, I. C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Matthew Arnold on Marcus Aurelius

I think I mentioned a few days ago that Marcus Aurelius was once read much more widely than he is now. To scholars of the mid-nineteenth century, he was one of the great figures, about whom one had to know in order to claim the status of an educated person.

The Victorians, believing that certain representatives of the past carried the seeds of civilization, felt a greater urge than we do to say something about them. This is partly the reason for the nineteenth century's being a time of fine essays. Writers then believed that coming to grips with the essence of symbolic characters was one of the pressing duties of a thinking person.

Matthew Arnold was probably the foremost English essayist of the Victorian period. Like Marcus Aurelius, he was once the stock in trade of any schoolmaster worth his salt. It would have been unthinkable in 1920, or even 1930, to graduate from college without having read Matthew Arnold. I'm not sure what his status is today, but I would guess that he is unknown to a good many college graduates.

Arnold was the son of Dr. Thomas Arnold of Rugby, the most famous headmaster of a period when the leaders of the great public schools in England -- places like Eton and Winchester -- were among the important heroes of society. So Matthew grew up with the best educational opportunities his world had to offer.

In a way, he was a rebel and didn't take full advantage of them. But all through his youth, he worked to develop a gracious prose style that eventually made him the envy of literary circles. As a young man, he was known primarily as a poet. And it is mainly his poetic reputation that sustains knowledge of him today. His poem "Dover Beach," is widely reprinted in anthologies, and, I think, is still read by a good many American high school students.

In his later life, his poetic vein dried up, and he turned to prose, writing voluminously on literature, society, and religion. His best known prose work is a book-length essay titled Culture and Anarchy, in which he describes the three levels of English society, and the virtues and vices of each. It's a very witty book, and one that makes points about social divisions which are still true. It's also one of the few books I would recommend to almost anyone.

Arnold admired Marcus Aurelius intensely, calling him one of the best men of all history. His essay on the Roman emperor, written in 1863, is still cited in almost every current bibliography concerning the rule of the Antonines. So, for this reason alone -- that Arnold's essay is the single most famous short piece on Marcus Aurelius -- I should call it to your attention. However, that's not the main reason I recommend it to you.

I know of no one who does a better job than Arnold of pointing out the close affinity of Marcus Aurelius's morality to Christianity. We've talked about this some, and you'll recall that I've cited passages from the Gospels which say almost exactly the same things that Marcus Aurelius says in his Meditations. Yet, keep in mind that he never read the Christian documents. In his mind, Christianity was simply an eccentric sect, not worth much attention.

Yet, despite this affinity, there is a great difference between Roman stoicism and Christian theology. Here's what Matthew Arnold says that difference is:

> It is impossible to arise from reading Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius without a sense of constraint and melancholy, without feeling that the burden laid on man is well-nigh greater than he can bear. Honour to the sages who have felt this, and yet have borne it! Yet, even for the sage, this sense of labour and sorrow in his march towards the goal constitutes a relative inferiority; the noblest souls of whatever creed, the pagan Empedocles as well as the Christian Paul, have insisted on the necessity of an inspiration, a joyful emotion to make moral action perfect; an obscure indication of this necessity is one drop of truth in the ocean of verbiage with which the controversy on justification by faith has flooded the world. But, for the ordinary man, this sense of labour and sorrow constitutes an absolute disqualification; it paralyzes him; under the weight of it, he cannot make way towards the goal at all. The paramount virtue of religion is, that it has lighted up morality; that it has supplied the emotion and inspiration needful for carrying the sage along the narrow way perfectly, for carrying the ordinary man along it at all.

This is a controversial theological passage, but it seems to me, without doubt, a good critical one. It tells us something pertinent about the relationship of Christianity and Rome. And, if you'll let your imagination run, it could even tell you something about the opportunity that a Roman emperor had in the time of Marcus Aurelius genuinely to advance the interests of the state.

I think it's a blow to education, that we don't have recognized figures today who do the work for us that Matthew Arnold did for his generation.

November 21, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Edward Gibbon and the Roman Empire

I would be remiss to let the course pass without introducing you to Edward Gibbon. His six-volume work, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, is probably still the most famous historical composition in existence. And, though some of his details have been corrected by modern researchers, it would would not be hard to argue that Gibbon's history is still the finest account of the past written in English.

This year is the two hundredth anniversary of the publication of his final volume. The first volume was published twelve years earlier, in an even more famous year, 1776. Any book that stands the test of two centuries and still draws readers has something more to offer than mere accuracy. In Gibbon's case, his gift is the ability to sketch history on a grand scale, to see time not in years but in centuries, and even to discuss developments which find their culmination a milennium later.

Since Gibbon's topic is the decline of the Empire, you might suppose he would have nothing to say about the reign of Marcus Aurelius, which is generally thought to have marked the summit of imperial history. However, Gibbon is the sort of thinker to remind us that it is precisely when things seem to be going best that the seeds of dissolution are likely to be planted.

The story he tells of Rome is that of a system, the most magnificent the world has ever known, which traded freedom for power, glory, riches, and security, and by so doing, set the stage for its own demise. That may sound a little too pat, or a little too Whiggish, as a historian might say. But from the pen of Gibbon it flows out in convincing style, and though one can credit the arguments against it, no one can say that Gibbon has been disproved.

An interesting characteristic of Gibbon is that though his story is one of decay, nobody has painted the glories of Rome more forcefully. The great Roman achievements in law, military effectiveness, engineering, and economics are all given detailed treatment. One gets the sense that Gibbon would have liked to have been a Roman citizen whose business carried him to all portions of the Empire. The awe of feeling, for example, when one stood on the Roman border in Scotland that he was connected by well-kept roads to the southeastern border in Syria more than four thousand miles away, was the kind of emotion to excite him. As he said:

> Whatever evils either reason or declamation have imputed to extensive empire, the power of Rome was attended with some beneficial consequences to mankind; and the same freedom of intercourse which extended the vices, diffused likewise the improvements of social life.

Only the first three chapters of Volume I deal with the period we have studied. Yet, in the short space of about fifty pages, Gibbon conveys a feeling for what was going on at that time as well as anyone I have read. In addition to being graphic, he is not afraid to infuse intellectual stimulation through his own opinions -- views which might well be applied to other times besides the era of the Roman Empire.

For instance, in speaking of the Emperor Trajan's conquests, Gibbon notes:

> As long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters.

One can agree, or disagree, but it is hard to read Gibbon without getting involved. And in that respect, he has given to his history the bequest that Anthony Trollope said any literary work is always most in need of -- that it should be read.

I hope you will read it sometime, and, if not the whole thing, then at least the beginning chapters of the first volume.

November 27, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Henry V and God's Purposes on Earth

The moral basis of government is one of those unanswerable questions we are forced to confront when we examine pre-modern eras. Democracy has become so strong a doctrine of our civil religion we have a hard time comprehending that there is nothing more logical about it than there is about systems that would strike us as bizarre. Furthermore, in addition to democracy, we are so wedded to the notion of the nation-state as the normal unit of sovereignty, we have a hard time understanding that the nation itself is a relatively recent mental construct.

In the time of Henry V of England, whom we will start discussing tomorrow, the concept of nationhood was still in its infancy, and the reigning notion of government was that the people should be ruled by royal families who derived their authority from God.

If you don't understand that, then the entire stretch of The Hundred Years' War (1337-1453), in which the Battle of Agincourt was a notable incident, will strike you simply as an insane mismash. The curious thing about wars is that they generally strike people on the outside as insane. Yet, to the participants they become not only significant but the overweening issue.

Think, for example, of the recently concluded war between Iraq and Iran. What was it about? Hundreds of thousands of people were killed for what seems to us utter foolishness. Yet, evidently, it didn't seem that way to them. If it had, why would they have carried on as long as they did?

To understand history you have to forget, temporarily, about who you are and what you think makes sense, and try to put yourself in the place of one of the participants of the time you're studying.

If we were members of the upper classes, living in England in the early 15th century, it probably would have been a matter of major concern to us whether our recently crowned king was to achieve his claim to the throne of France. And it would not have struck us as weird or improbable that the two kingdoms might be united under one monarch. Also, we might very well have felt that helping him attain his goal was a duty imposed on us by God. Certainly, these feelings would have been just as strong with us then as the feelings some of us have now that it is our duty to protect the world from the encroachments of Communism.

It is very hard to know whether God wanted Henry to rule in both England and France, but it seems clear that Henry thought he did.

The king was a devout man, who said his prayers sincerely, thought carefully about theological issues, and took very seriously his God-given right to the throne held by the demented Charles VI of France. Incredible as it may seem to us, every contemporary document indicates that Henry truly saw himself as the instrument of God. His final words, spoken loudly just minutes before his death in 1422, were "in manus tuas, Domine, ipsum terminum redemisti." These are from the 21st Psalm, which is a thanksgiving prayer after the king's victory in battle.

So, people are strange creatures, and what and how they believe is the strangest thing about them. The most difficult feature of history is that we can never take belief sufficiently into account. Obviously, it leads men to do astounding things, and, yet, we can't seem to credit it. The easier course is to attribute action to greed, or pride, or hunger for power. Certainly, the latter have a lot to do with behavior. Still, belief about ultimate goals exists, and I suspect it drives people more than we can imagine.

The Henry of history was obviously quite a different man from the heroic character of Shakespeare's historical drama. The latter has become far more famous than the real man. Shakespeare's Henry is easier to understand, and he can be made to serve modern aspirations. Besides that, he is a magnificent creation. But the historical monarch was an interesting character too. Could we but know him better, we might find he was too complex to be painted even by Shakespeare's mighty powers.

November 30, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Criticism of Henry V.

Henry V. is not considered to be one of Shakespeare's greater plays, because, paradoxically, it succeeeds so perfectly in doing what it sets out to do. Shakespeare is considered the greatest writer in English because he portrays so convincingly the human spirit wrestling with itself. And it always out of that contest that the greatest drama is made. Yet, in Henry V. the goal is to show a whole spirit carrying out an heroic act. The goal is achieved, but for many readers much of the drama is lost.

Consider this comment by Charles Knight, from Studies in Shakespeare, 1849:

> Here are no struggles between will and fate; no frailties of humanity dragging down its virtues in an abyss of guilt and sorrow, -- no crimes, -- no obduracy, -- no penitence. We have the lofty and unconquerable spirit of national and individual heroism riding triumphantly over every danger; but the spirit is so lofty that we feel no uncertainty for the issue.

The problem is that Henry is too good for fully serious drama. Shakespeare's histories are not generally classified as either comedies or tragedies, but if we were forced to put this play into one or the other category, we would have to say it is the former. It is comic not in the sense of being funny, though it does have its funny parts, but it is comic because the happy outcome is not in doubt.

Another Victorian critic, Thomas Kenny, describes the hero and his problem succinctly (The Life and Genius of Shakespeare, 1864):

> Henry V. is here exhibited as a complete, harmonius, self-possessed character; but such characters are not dramatic.

Mr. Kenny's choice of the verb "exhibited" is fortunate. We don't get inside the king; we don't live with him through his troubles. Instead we see him set before us magnificently, and the sight is envigorating rather than disturbing. We don't go away from a production of Henry V filled with quandaries, we go away lifted up.

William Butler Yeats saw that very clearly (Ideas of Good and Evil, 1903):

> Shakespeare watched Henry V. not indeed as he watched the greater souls in the visionary procession, but cheerfully, as one watches some handsome spirited horse, and he spoke the tale as he spoke all tales, with tragic irony.

Yeats's mention of irony raises the point that has troubled many critics. After the happy feelings are over, and when we have come out from under the spell of Henry's riveting speeches, we are likely to ask ourselves, "What did Henry really achieve, and what sort of hero was he anyway?" And when that question is asked, the answer may well be that he was a great but conventional warrior, which leads on, in turn, to another question: "What gifts do conventional warriors bring to humanity?"

In a sense, Henry is simply a melodramatic figure raised to splendor by Shakespeare's transcendent rhetoric. If that, ultimately, is what Shakespeare wanted us to see, then he did, indeed, tell the tale with tragic irony.

I have mentioned several times through the course my belief that humans are best seen as creatures living with inevitable tensions. Literature becomes great when it brings these tensions unforgettably to our notice. In the case of Henry V., we are pulled between celebrating the king's wonderful, self-confident bravery and doubting his final meaning for human kind. And this is just a specific instance of the mixed feelings intelligence will always have about conventional virtue. So, though it's good to glory with Henry in his victory, it's also good to have second thoughts.

December 7, 1988

TO: Students, I.C. 211

FROM: John Turner

SUBJECT: Ave Atque Vale

We've come to the end of the course, which, for me, has rushed along more rapidly than I anticipated. Although it seems that we ought to be able to do a lot meeting three times a week over three and a half months, the dimensions of the task are so great that the accomplishment is dwarfed by comparison. But, then, we have to keep in mind that our purpose here was not to complete anything, but rather to get some things started.

We won't know what we've accomplished till years have passed. And the poignancy of the situation then will be that we won't be together to talk about it.

Today is the last time we'll all be together in a room to talk with one another. Some of you may heave a sigh of relief at that thought, and, if you do, I can't blame you. But for me there's always a little sadness in breaking up a group, whether or not its performance was always perfect.

I'll confess that I'm far from a perfect teacher. Every time I set out to try something in that role, I end up failing to do many of the things I had hoped. I always tell myself that I am going to engage every student, no matter what. And then the days rush by, and I neglect to ask the question I might have asked, or I fail to call on someone who hasn't been as involved in the class as he, or she, needs to be. Time plays tricks on us by making us think we can do more than we can.

However, I will say this: I've learned a great deal. So, if I haven't been a great teacher, at least you have -- at least some great teaching has been going on.

If you permit me, I'll make one last arrogant statement. Every one of you needs the kind of work we've been doing. Every one of you is capable of benefitting from struggling with important texts. Every one of you will be cheating himself, or herself, if you don't continue trying to read closely and deeply, and try to apply your reading to the real life you must lead.

There are no people in this class so limited that they can't get good from the best that has been thought and said.

The main things I hope you take away from the class are:

1) A belief in your duty to engage in the ongoing conversation about human purpose, and,

2) A respect for the people who have made major contributions to that conversation.

I have quoted Yeats to you several times during the course, so I'll quote him here one more time at the end:

> It is no little thing to achieve anything in any art, to stand alone perhaps for many years, to go a path no other man has gone, to accept one's own thought when the thought of others has the authority of the world behind it .... to give one's life as well as one's words, which are so much nearer to one's soul, to the criticism of the world.

That's what the people we have read have done, and we ought to honor them for it. It's also good to remember that the people you honor and respect are the best indicators of who you are.

I hope you all continue with good learning, and grow in your ability to appreciate it.

Come to see me when you can.

In-Class Writing Exercises

During each of the regular class periods -- normally at the end -- I asked the students to express themselves briefly on a topic related to the lesson of the day. I did not, however, ask questions which required knowledge of the reading assignments, and I assured the students they they would not be graded on their answers.

I had two main purposes in doing this. The most obvious was to insure some activity from each student each day. The educational literature tells us that active involvement in a learning process increases its effectiveness. I was proceeding on the belief that even these short, spontaneous writing exercises would assist students in getting writing projects underway.

My second purpose was to help students understand that ordinary questions of social existence demand care and discipline. I hoped that writing about topics normally dealt with in conversation would cause students to recognize the connection between liberal arts study and everyday life.

The results were encouraging. Not only were my original purposes served, but I got the impression that writing about fundamental issues tended to increase the students' idealism, and promoted a sense of social responsibility. The answers were mostly intelligent and thoughtful, belying the notion that college students are empty-headed. They may not always have the vocabulary to express their thoughts. But they do think, and they take their thoughts seriously.

Readers should keep in mind that these opinions were scribbled onto four by six cards during five-minute sessions. Consequently, they are not polished. The students did not see the questions in advance. What we have are unpremeditated responses.

The following evidence says to me that though college students may need help in developing their thoughts, they are ready to address the most complex human issues. The more commentary from students I see, the more I am convinced that we mis-serve education when we condescend to them by diluting their intellectual fare.

I.C. 211 August 31, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Describe an event from the past about which you feel strongly, but in which you were not personally involved. State briefly why you feel strongly about it, and how you learned what you know about it.

Student #1

I was watching the news two nights ago and there was a report on two men who had been apprehended by the police. They were illegal immigrants that had fled their country of Russia. There was an American woman who helped them come to this country and provided shelter and jobs for them, etc. They apparently murdered her and this is why they were finally arrested after eluding the police for two years. Now what I don't seem to understand is why would they kill someone who had been so helpful and nice. There must be an underlying reason. I can't wait to see what comes of it.

Student #2

I feel strongly about the issue of slavery in our country. I believe it was a time of great confusion and miscommunication resulting in heartless degradation of human beings. One of the reasons I feel so strongly about this issue is because of the fact that even today a lingering form of slavery still exists in many parts of the country...and that is the one of prejudice people - judging others due to the color of their skin.

I interpret such an issue as prejudice people and slavery as a personal war with one's self and his brothers around him. It is sad that it seems to exist even today, when people are still fighting with other countries.

Student #3

The event I will discuss today is the recent shooting of the Iranian airliner in the Persian Gulf. I felt strongly about it because I didn't like some of the criticism that some of the media was giving the commander of the ship. I mean given that the Iranians have been placing mines in the Gulf and attacking other ships (like the U.S.S Stark), what was the commander supposed to do? There was verification of an Iranian military jet in the area and when the airliner started descending was the commander suppose to sit there with all the people on the ship and hope its not the military jet? I was really ticked off (as I often am) about how some of the news media covered and discussed this issue.

Student #4

With respect to the new SFC (Seargent First Class) situation at Norwich, I feel it's ludicrous.

These young punks had the opportunity to attend a "5" day crash course instructed by Army Reserve D.I.'s this summer. The purpose of the course was to teach them control, cadence and drilling qualities that the Norwich Cadet Cadre lacked.

This is all well and good, however, 5 days of B.S. does not constitute the title "D.I." D.I.'s in the services attend school for this purpose for as long as one year. The only thing that shows proof of expertise is the Smokey the Bear hat. Norwich Cadets don't deserve these hats. One visual sighting was all it took to totally appall me instantly.

Student #5

I feel strongly against this new idea that has evolved after the recent Italian airshow accident, that these types of displays should be stopped for they are lacking in real purpose and are hazardous. I feel that they are necessary (along with radar maneuvering flights) because it allows for an "in action testing" for the machinery and valuable training time and experience for the pilots. Without this, if and when a combat situation occurs we could still very well have some "kinks" left in the system.

Student #6

I guess an issue that first comes to mind is the issue of how women in this world don't get equal rights like men do. I'm talking financially, work schedules, and in just relationships in general. First of all, I don't feel that a man who works on construction, etc. should get paid more than a woman who does the exact same job - it's discrimination. Okay, and then there is a marriage and the man works 8 hours a day, and the woman works 8 hours a day, well, it's the woman who comes home to clean the house and take care of the kids. Then of course there is the issue of a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship. It's okay for the man to go out with the "boys," but it's different when the girl wants to go out with the "girls," because she's unchaperoned.

Student #7

The building of our summer home on Cape Cod. My family had been discussing the prospect of constructing a summer home on the beach front of Brewster, Mass. A year later I was informed of the beautiful product from my parents. The reason I was informed of the finished home a year later was that they thought I was home and was involved in the planning. They had forgotten I was at college and my other siblings were the ones involved.

Student #8

One of the things that I feel strongly about was the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. My feelings about this involvement are mixed ones because the U.S. went to help stop the spread of Communism in the South Eastern part of Asia, but they also sent thousands of U.S. military men and women to their deaths for something that really wasn't our fight to begin with.

Student #9

A historical event I feel strongly about was the U.S. government's appropriation and movement of American natives and their lands. These people have been treated very badly throughout our country's growth and development. I would have thought their culture would have been accepted and thought of as something special. After all, American natives tamed the land before any Anglo settlers. My interest in this has grown as I've begun to read some historical novels and biographies.

Student #10

I feel very strongly about the Star Wars Race. Reagan keeps pushing for Star Wars and wants to take money away from education for it. Why should we the taxpayers pay for something we can use (nuclear bombs) and if it ever is used it will kill people. I believe Reagan has not thought thoroughly about taking money for Star Wars from education, because if he had then he would have realized that education was going to deteriorate. And he would not have the people with the education to build his weapons.

Student #11

With the new tax laws in effect, many people's taxes have gone up. And not just gone up a little, but for some it was quite drastic.

I really had nothing to do with any tax laws, it didn't effect me because I own no property. I learned of these people's taxes being raised by observing different conversations and I learned a lot from a friend who I worked with this past summer.

Student #12

One major issue which has changed all of our lives is our freedom. America today is great, because we all are given many choices to decide what we want to do, whether it be to further our education or to work. It is all up to the individual.

Student #13

Yesterday I learned that doctors want there to be a new level of nurses brought up to help take care of the nursing shortage.

I feel strongly against this. Since 1923, when the Goldmark Report was done, people have tried to make the nursing profession have more prestige and give it the actual credit it deserves. In 1965, it was proposed that to be an R.N. you must be at a Bachelor's level. This has only taken place in one state, North Dakota. I feel this new level of nursing, which would be equivalent to an L.P.N. would be taking several steps backwards in the profession. It would return nurses to being doctor's maids. Nursing is to important for the step back.

Student #14

I learned about the Vietnam War all through my schooling. For a while I felt very strongly that we were right to have been involved; we were protecting their right to freedom and democracy. More recently I decided we should not have been involved; we committed many atrocities to the Vietnamese people that were uncalled for. Now I'm not so sure how I feel, there are so many sides to look at that it is hard to decide which is right and which is wrong.

Student #15

A few years ago the Montpelier School System started to get rid of some of the sports activities and other things because the townspeople did want to pass the school budget.

Personally I think that is wrong. Kids should be able to have a large variety of activities to choose from. They even got rid of some courses. I don't think that kids should have to take the consequences just because parents and taxpayers don't want to fork over the amount it would take.

I.C. 211 September 2, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

If somebody should give you all the money you could ever spend, what do you think you would do with the next ten years of your life?

Student #1

I would probably go to Africa and help set up hospitals and clinics. These hospitals and clinics would be for the people in Africa who can not afford medical care. Also because there is such an AIDS epidemic in Africa I would set up schools to educate the people about this disease and other things that would benefit them. If all my wants and needs were taken care of I would want to give of myself to benefit someone else.

Student #2

Even if I had all the money in the world at this point in my life I would still continue to live my life as I am now. I would finish college and go on to be a teacher. The things that would change in my life would be the way I spend money. I would buy myself a car and pay my college expenses and bills on my own. Also, I would give to my family, friends and charities in need of money.

To be honest with you it is hard to imagine the reality of being so rich. I say I would continue my life in basically the same order, but who really knows what I would do. You know, money has a way of doing funny things to people.

Student #3

Well, I'd probably do all the things that I've always wanted to do but didn't have the time because I was working or going to school. I'd do a lot of jamming, I'd travel to exotic places and dive in crystal clear water instead of muddy Lake Champlain, and then when I was content with all of that I guess I'd probably be forced to find new interests and learn about new things. However, I think that 10 years would probably go by fast and I still wouldn't have enough time to do all of those things. I figure I could go down to the Caribbean and kill 10 years down there, no problem.

Student #4

I, having unlimited funds, would call Reher Morrison and have them build me a state of the art pro stock car. Along with the car would be the totally maxed out semi complete with machine shop and crew.

Student #4 (continued)

I would then (30 seconds later) go house hunting and/or build my home base house in Evergreen, Colorado. Each member of my family would have their own individual self gratifying position on the racing team. However, if they chose not to participate that would be fine.

My goals would be: pro stock world championship within 2 years and to finish the ten years with at least 3 world championships and the quickest, fastest pro stocker in history.

Student #6

If I was financially secure in 10 years I would travel a lot first of all, would buy my mother a house, car, clothes, etc., and the same with my brothers. Actually, I think I'd buy my mother her trailerpark she's always wanted.

I would, after my immediate family was taken care of, send money to C.A.R.E. for the needy children of the world and make sure that these children had food, medical supplies, housing, etc.

I would definitely continue working after taking a couple of trips to say London, the Bahamas, Paris. Oh, I would plan to be married with at least one child, so they of course would come before giving the money to C.A.R.E. or Foster Care, etc.

Student #8

I'd take the money and buy land in large amounts and start many different wildlife preservations and wild animal clinics to help disabled wildlife and to relocate them from over populated areas to new areas. It is important for people today to realize just how important our forests and animals are to us these days. People should take just a little time each day to think about our environment and its many problems.

Student #9

With my surplus money, I would travel to Ireland. As a little girl I'd sit on my Grampa's knee and listen to stories about Ireland. I thought someday I'd find a leprechaun. I'd like to stay in Ireland and track down my Grandfather's family. Then I'd like to buy a dozen Irish hunters for my mother and begin a stud farm with her as my trainer. Irish bred hunters are some of the finest horses around. Eventually, I'd probably return to teaching because I hate to remain inactive for long.

Student #10

If I was financially secure and never had to worry about money again I would take up a project. I would put my efforts into a good cause such as helping abused children, rape victims or helping the poor. I would not help by just giving money but giving myself and my time.

Student #12

If I had enough money to live very comfortably I would first travel the country. I would go to Germany after to see the very place where I was born. I would of course pay off any debts that my family or I had at the time. My main objective though would be to travel and see the world, and of course have all the fine luxuries along the way.

Student #13

If I had all the money I wanted I would travel around the world. I would probably try to work in the Peace Corp. I would do everything in my power to help the third world nations. I think I would give them a lot of money.

I would also try to see absolutely every thing possible. See every country, state, city. I would try everything the world has to offer. I would also make sure my family is well provided for.

Student #14

I would complete my education for ECSE/ECE, teach for 2 or 3 years, go back to school for a Master's in Speech/Language, work in that field for a few years and then take some time off to explore the field of integrated education. I would love to create the perfect school to integrate all students (handicapped and "normal") into the same classrooms. From there I might go back to school to gain a degree in administration or I might just hire someone to do that job for me so that I could implement my plans.

Student #15

If I had all the money I needed for the rest of my life I would probably finish college and still get a job (at some point) because I would probably get bored. I would probably invest a lot of it. Otherwise I would be able to buy all the toys, animals and things I have always wanted. Even though I would have money I would still like to work as an accountant because I love accounting. But yet if I didn't want to work it wouldn't be like I had to in order to survive. I would also travel as much as I could to see as much as I could. I would not have to work my life away so my kids could go to college.

I.C. 211 September 7, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Does the question of how the world came into being interest you? If it does, explain why; if not, speculate on why most cultural systems have myths which tell how the world began.

Student #2

Yes, the question of how the world came into being interests me. It is inevitable that it will interest any human being. Humans have naturally curious minds and always seem to be searching for answers and explanations. If one sees a starting line he searches for the finish line, if he sees an end he goes backwards to find a starting point. I just seem to learn more toward the theory of scientific evolution, more than God's creation. It seems more logical and plausible.

I believe cultures create myths and explanations for various things such as the earth's creation because they need explanation - they need theory; it gives people more of a sense of structure and security. People seem to be scared of the unknown.

Student #3

I think the reason that there are myths is because earlier civilizations didn't have the scientific ability to accurately discover or figure out how the world really developed. So they started the "myths" which were probably just thoughts of how the world developed that were pushed on from generation to generation.

Student #4

Slightly. However, how the world began raises more questions. My question is: How will it end? And can we change that? The Bible has good examples of what God will accept or not. Guidelines will always be parted from. Until their not we need to get smarter.

Student #5

It does interest me because I'd like to know what the true beginning was. Everyone is always in the constant search of how and why, and along the way many ideas have been formulated integrating religious belief and science, plain science or spoofs off the bible, and all of the believers for each one of these think their view to be the true one reason of the beginning and that all others are lost.

Student #6

Yes, it does because one of the first things I questioned when I was a kid being taught of the Bible was that "Where does God come from? Who created him? Who wrote the first Bible and how was it written?" I was told that God spoke to different people, and that they were the ones who wrote it, but by being raised in a strict Catholic family, one doesn't ask such questions. We then began going to school and learning of evolution, etc. and that raises a question in peoples' minds about if we evolved from apes, then how does the Bible fit into this plan or does it fit in at all.

Student #7

Yes, the question of how the world came into being interests me. To learn and gain further insight in why things and people are here and to see if the myths to which they evolved have any truth to them or if folktellers have made them up and exaggerated with each one of a different background from culture helped.

Student #8

The creation of the world interests me because I would like to work in the field of science. Since most scientists believe in evolution it is hard to believe the myths of God creating the world, because evolution clearly shows that men had in fact evolved from apes. Also, however, how does the Bible tell of all the prehistoric animals and organisms?

Student #9

I believe most cultures have myths about how the world began because no one really knows why. As humans we need something to believe in. Myths about the world are what we believe in and can debate. History is full of myths, legends, etc. Together these stories enrich each culture or geographic area. There isn't any fool proof way to keep records timeless except for word of mouth. Through each generate or change in generations the myths expand.

Student #10

The question of how the world came into being does interest me very much. The reason being that no one knows the answer. Some people believe the Bible and others believe science. It is hard to come to a decision when scientists offer facts and religion offers the Bible. The Bible raises questions while science answers them.

Student #11

I am interested in a few different theories of creation but being a Roman Catholic, my faith must leave me to believe what is written in Genesis. Now this doesn't mean that I take it literally but I believe that my God created Earth and destroyed it once for a reason. I don't know the reason...no one does. But because of my upbringing (12 years in Catholic school) I feel I must believe and take it as faith.

Student #12

I am very interested to know how the world came about. It seems to me, however, that there are _many_ unanswered questions, so a good portion of "what we do know" are based completely on myths. I realize that it could never be told in "black and white", but to me it is very hard to comprehend that there was or is a God. However, I am not saying I do not believe in God, because I truly do not know if I do or not. I guess I am looking for facts and there are really not that many. But I am willing to listen, it's fascinating.

Student #13

I am interested in knowing how the world began. I believe that it is good to know how everything came to be. If feel if I knew more about how things came to be I wouldn't take most things for granted. I think it would be hard to not want to know. I think most countries have myths about the beginning to give reasons for existence. I know we didn't just arrive. Someone somewhere had to start us. Since no one knows exactly who, when and why the myths are good for thought.

Student #14

The question never really interested me before studying in 10th grade the case of State of Tennessee vs. John ?, in the 20s. It was called the Monkey Trial and the following summer I read and acted out part of the play. Since then I sometimes think about some of the questions that were brought up in the courtroom involving the length of creation vs the evolution theory.

Student #15

Yes, because there are other theories of how the world began. There is the big boom! theory which is totally opposite, as far as I can see, of the Bible. Maybe it is because I have taken more science classes than religion that I see more evidence toward the scientific way. But who knows which one happened or even if maybe it was a combination of both. I guess all you can say is you can believe what you want to believe. There is no "real" answer to how the world came about. It is all _theory_. This really confuses many people.

I.C. 211 September 12, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Does the concept of monotheism make sense to you? If it does, tell why you think it's important; if not, tell where the trouble with it lies.

Student #1

Several hundred years ago the concept of there being many Gods was perhaps more popular than it is today. Several hundred years ago there was not all the technology and knowledge about the world, environment and the human body as there is today, so people made up Gods to explain the events that happened around them. Now with the knowledge we have the idea of many Gods is not as popular but many people do still believe in a God. Perhaps people feel the need to believe in something.

Student #2

Monotheism, the concept of having one God vs. many gods can be considered reasonable in some cultures, yet unreasonable in others. In the time of the Bible (Genesis) I would say having one god makes more sense because it provides "consistency" in life for the people, and it would lessen the many power struggles (like what we have today).

In this day and age with this over-populated world made up of many cultures and many diverse kinds of people I feel that there needs to be more than one ruler, and "sub-rulers". If there were not enough rulers for the people to speak through, no one would be able to speak their minds. In turn it would not be a democratic society.

Student #3

I don't really know, I guess since I was raised and grew up learning about religion from the Bible and the one "God" in the Bible, I would have to say that it doesn't really make sense. I don't really know a lot about other types of religion and the other "Gods" that go along with them so this is rather difficult to answer. It is hard to really be objective without my own beliefs interfering.

Student #4

Monotheism in general seems to be a matter of personal preference. To be specific, who is to say that the god that christians believe in isn't the same god as the Indians (American), or Buddhists, and Ala? Just because some have an idol to worship doesn't mean their interpretation of who or what God is isn't right. I think religious relativity should be as important as one's own innate or trained doctrines.

I look at it this way: If the ground shook, wouldn't we all look up?

Student #5

I think that monotheism is important in a general sense. Everyone is an individual and therefore holds different views, so the "one god" we all chose (if any) is not necessarily going to be the same one, but the idea of having a greater being in which we try to follow, I feel is beneficial for it makes up part of our moral thought, modifies behavior to some extent, and attempts to satisfy the ever present question we all have of "why".

Student #7

The concept of having many gods brings upon many ways of thinking and behaving. Many gods fill a society of people with ways of thinking, ways of worshiping and preaching. The concept of one god leaves many ways to worship plus gives a feeling of unity. The cons of many gods would be confusion, rivalry (worse than there is between two groups that believe in one god). What one person chooses to believe in is fine as long as it doesn't disrupt society and the way of live or interfere with other's thoughts or types of worshipping.

Student #9

I believe the monotheism theory does make sense. As religions have branched off from one another the name of this one God has been changed.

I'm not a very religious person so I find this topic very hard to write about.

When one speaks about God I believe he is also talking about faith. The two are intertwined. The amount of faith you have in your believes, relationships, etc. may also predetermine feelings about a God.

Student #10

The idea of one god makes sense to me. The idea of two gods does not because I do not believe two people or spirits can possess the same power without some sort of conflict. The idea of one god is much more realistic to me, all though I don't know how realistic a single god is.

Student #11

I believe in one God and it is important for me to believe in this concept. In my religion, I was brought up to be faithful to one God. There is also the trinity or three gods in one person. This is a mystery to all of us because there can't be three people in one. But I believe it with faith. Monotheism makes total sense to me.

Student #12

Having one God seems more reasonable than having many Gods. The reason for this is because "He" created us, therefore he should be the only one to have any kind of ruling over us. In other words having too many is sometimes too much, and in this case one God is enough.

Student #13

I'm not real sure how I feel about this. I think that everyone should believe in the same God. I think it would bring a certain amount of unity to the world.

I think one God is good but I also think believing in him differently is important. It is necessary to have different outlooks and different feelings about this God.

If everyone believed the same there would be no question and no further discussion or research. The though of monotheism is hard because I would want people to believe my way. I wouldn't want to change my beliefs.

Student #14

Monotheism - I have religious beliefs that say monotheism is the only theory. I guess that I've never really thought of more than one god except when reading Roman and Greek mythology. I think the mythological societies went too far with the idea of a god for everything. I might accept a god for the living and the dead, but then even that would seem strange to me. I guess having grown up with one god I can't really see having more.

Student #15

I don't really know. I know there is supposed to be a God, but who knows, maybe there are more. There isn't any proof. What really bogles my mind is how can one "thing" (I say it because God isn't human) do all the things God does without some help from others. Like in the Greek myths with Zeus and all the other gods or gods helpers (what ever you call them). Each one of those is responsible for 1 or 2 things and that's it. The job incurs too many things in themselves to do any more.

I.C. 211 September 14, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

What sort of reverence do we owe to the nation? And does that reverence give the nation the right to tell us what is right, and what is wrong?

Student #1

Without people there would be no nation. People are what the nation is made of so in fact we do not owe the nation anything. The question should be what do we owe ourselves for we are the nation. Everyone feels they owe themselves something but what I feel I owe to myself is not what someone else may feel they owe to themselves. Each one of us must stop and seriously think what would make us a better person and then see to it that we accomplished it. This is what we owe ourselves. To the nation.

Student #2

I would say we owe great respect to the nation. Without structure, guidance, leadership or should I say government, we would not be the kind of country we are today. Yes, there are many problems in this country, but it would be much worse if we were without guidance.

I feel the nation has the right to tell us what to do and not to do to an extent. The nation sets the boundaries and guidelines while we are left to make our own final judgements and decisions. We need this structure, though. This nation, like many others needs a starting point, a place to grow from.

Student #3

Well I think that we do owe some dedication and respect for our nation. I mean compared to many other nations in the world we've got it pretty good here and it wouldn't necessarily be good if it wasn't for some of the national (government) policies. I think that there should be a basic and overall governing authority for nations because with as many people as there are, if it was left up to the individual to set the rules there would be conflicting rules and policies and total chaos. I think that there is a limit to how much power the governing body of the nation should have, and today I think that the government has perhaps too much authority. But that is a totally different issue that I won't get into.

Student #6

I feel that every person owes their country respect, honor, bravery, loyalty, and honesty. I feel that the reason we owe our country this is because through the years and what has happened to us, and the country has a great influence on how people behave now and how the nation in turn sees its' people. We all need to have loyalty and respect in each other so that we can pull together in not only good times, but times of trouble, when it really counts, too.

Student #8

We the people of the U.S. have a reverence toward the country. We try to make the country the best possible in the world by making the best products that we can. Also, however, we must also fight to defend our country and its honor.

Therefore, I believe that all American citizens do have a reverence for the U.S.

Student #10

I believe that your responsibility to the nation is to help maintain the government. I feel this way because the government is for us. The best way that we can do this is to educate the people so that they will all be able to read, gather, and come to a conclusion on information and make decisions on what is best for a nation as a whole.

Student #12

Yes, I do feel we all (not necessarily owe) should pay respect to our nation along with duties. Our nation should be protected by the people within it, and the people should want to do this. The majority of the people in this nation have contributed in some way, whether it be small or a large amount of contribution.

Student #13

I feel we owe our country a great deal of respect. We are a very lucky group of people to live in such a free country.

I think I take our country for granted. I don't often think of the forefathers and all the work that has been to get our country where it is.

We are free and we get a share in making the decisions of the nation. I feel we are lucky and should give our country much respect.

Student #14

Yes, we should feel some reverence to the nation state, but I don't think that means they can hand me my morals on a silver platter. In the case of traffic laws where each of us making rules would be dangerous, we need some group that will help us decide. When the question is something that will not effect other people, then it is up to our own moral character to decide what to do.

Student #15

I guess we as people owe to the nation some things in compensation for the protection and help it gives us. Things as examples are: taxes and things like that.

In this type of "state" the people who are running it are the same as you and me unlike in the Bible where the king and lords were supposed to be so much better than the under class people. And still more God "seemed" to have a much greater role.

I.C. 211 September 19, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you believe that the acts a person commits in private life should be taken strongly into account in judging that person's fitness for public leadership?

Student #1

Private life affairs of a person should definitely weigh greatly whether a person should be in a public office. How can it not bear greatly? A person's private life is a great resource of information about their personality. When being publicly viewed a person acts in a way thought to be most pleasing. But in private is when the "Real Person" comes out and you get to the core of the character.

Student #2

No, I do not think one's personal life acts should have any judgement on whether he is fit for political authority. Whether speaking of David and Bathsheba or the various modern political affair scandals. I feel it is nonsense. What someone does in his personal life is his business (as least to an extent, it won't hurt his political career). Maybe David's act does make him a "slimeball" (as someone in the class stated), but that doesn't mean he can't be a good leader, or do his job well anymore. I personally would look down on him as a person of character for what he did, but I wouldn't say he couldn't be a leader anymore.

Student #3

Yes, I definitely do. The way a person acts in private life tells you more accurately what type of person he/she really is. People are always going to try and put on the "act" in public when seeking high leadership positions, so you can't really be sure exactly what type of person your dealing with. I think that most people agree. This is why the politicians are scrutinized so severely. I also read an article today in the Wall Street Journal that was saying how married men and women have far greater chances of getting the higher paying, more authoritative jobs than the single men and women do. Maybe this question about personal life and habits applies to that statistic.

Student #4

Fitness for public leadership has no real 100% correlation to what they do in private. On the other hand, private life is generally what a person's true inner self is interested in or geared toward. Politicians have facades that conveniently mask their true persona and deceive the general public. The basic concept is that people are people. There are no kings or presidents. There are only _people_ filling _positions_ of king or president.

Student #5

I believe that it should be taken into account, for it shows the type of character that person has and if they are devious and out of control of their own personal life, then how can they be seriously considered to control the lives surrounding him or her (depending on the job)?

Student #6

Yes, I do, and the reason I believe it does this is because if a man ran for president, for example, and his wife stood by him through all the campaigning, etc., and then he ran around with a girlfriend or something. Obviously, his wife wouldn't know about his cheating and obviously he would not tell her - so my question would be if he can lie about things that enter into his personal life - how can he not (when looking for an escape) do the same thing as president, governor, etc. I also think of how many people follow religious "leaders" such as Jimmy Swaggart. He would stand at his pulpit and tell everyone not to cheat, lie, etc., and then he went out and did this himself. It's hypocritical.

Student #7

I believe they should be taken strongly. His/her personal life comes over into public life most of the time. It actually depends on how severe or what has taken place. Competence will shine through if the person is an acceptable person to lead any form of a group - political, education, religious, etc. The effect is determined by the public.

Student #8

In my personal opinion, I believe that a person _shouldn't_ be judged on what he/she does on their own time or in their past.

Gary Hart did, however, tell people to follow him, but they shouldn't have made such a big deal out of it. No one knows for sure what really happened in his house that one night. Besides Hart had in my opinion the best shot for being our next president. Thus, what a person does on their own time really has nothing to do with the public eye.

Student #9

I believe that people should be entitled to their privacy. However for those with public jobs, especially high ranking, they are never quite out of the public eye. Private behavior shouldn't be the total reason for a dismissal or action. If the private behavior is consistent the likelihood their public behavior will be the same. Those in the public eye are under constant scrutiny. We the public want to perceive them as perfect and invincible. They are often models for others to follow.

Yes - I believe that people in public should have their privacy especially at family occurrences, i.e. a death, birth, wedding, but must expect infringement on those rights by the public.

Student #10

Yes, I do because that person is representing a certain group of people. He/she represents what the people want and value. If the representative does not have values that coincide with mine or his/her district then I do not feel that he/she is capable or is the best possible person to represent me or his/her district.

Student #12

I do believe that his/her acts should be taken into consideration. I mean no one is going to want a cocaine addict for a president. The individual should be closely looked at in all aspects, because this individual will have a higher position than you and I and will be making mainly vital decisions which will be affecting us.

Student #13

I'm not sure. I guess it depends on the acts. If the person has been caught stealing or lying or anything along that line it should matter. But I don't feel their personal relationships have any bearing on the subject. If a person is married or divorced, or if they didn't fight at a certain time makes no difference. I believe it's what they are doing now and how they believe that's important. People learn from mistakes. I'd rather see someone that has goofed then they would have some experience of the wrong thing. I wouldn't want someone practicing on us.

Student #14

There are variables in every question. In this question we have many variables. Did the public read more into the private act than there was? Were there circumstances that pushed the person to the act? Peer pressure, was it involved? Then you must ask how that act effects his person, his trustability. Will that act hurt the public?

Student #15

Yes and no, yes because if the person is doing something wrong or deceitful then who knows, maybe he will be like this in office. But then again maybe he wouldn't. I really feel bad for the people whose lives become public knowledge - you should have some privacy. What a person does in his/her private life should be kept private unless otherwise said by that person. It is still a scary thought of having someone who is deceitful and does things wrong in a powerful position.

I.C. 211 September 21, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you think the legal system of one's own society provides the ultimate guidance for moral behavior? If so, why do many people claim that they oppose the law for moral reasons? If not, what should be the ultimate source of one's moral guidance? In other words, how do we know what is right and what is wrong?

Student #1

The ultimate source of moral right or wrong is within ourselves. What a person feels is right and wrong will ultimately be determined by how they behave. Some individuals feel that what society thinks is right or wrong is not what they feel is right and wrong so they choose to do what they want and ignore society. Society attempts to set up basic rules of behavior to guide its people. Some people have no conception of how to behave and they depend greatly on society to tell them this.

Student #2

Legal systems of a society provide guidance for moral standards to a point or extent, but much more comes from one's family background, or own personal values.

When one goes against the legal system it may be wrong lawfully, but personally one may think it is the right thing to do; for example the issue of mercy killing - euthanasia, or the idea of "an eye for an eye."

There is probably not one human that exists today that agrees and live by every law of the nation's legal system.

Student #3

No I don't think that the law provides the ultimate guidance for setting right and wrong. The legal system only really touches on areas where there has been problems in the past (on issues of right and wrong or whatever) and someone says, "Hey there should be a law about that." Legal systems are always changing and being amended anyways -- that's probably why people take moral stands against the law from time to time. I don't think that there is an "ultimate guidance" for right and wrong. My idea and beliefs (on right and wrong) are probably very different from a lot of other people's, so I don't see how there could be an ultimate guidance because you're talking about personal beliefs when you start discussing wrong from right or vice versa.

Student #4

The legal system in any country does not hold the ultimate in determining right and wrong. Guidelines and rules and regs are only so descriptive. A classic example of this could be the wife who gets custody of her children just because she's a woman or the mother. She in fact could be a whore, thief, or child abuser. Was the decision to grant her custody right? Hardly, but who is to judge the judge?

Right and wrong has no black and white but many grey areas. Quite possibly the only one to judge is the superego. Of course if you're neurotic we're all in trouble.

Student #5

What is considered right and wrong varies from place to place and is formulated in accordance to that area/cultures needs. Now on one hand you will have those who abide by their laws and reject those of others which are contradictory. There are those however who do not consider their laws the true ones, and that is a matter of opinion. In those people's cases they should relocate to an area that is more adjustable to his/her beliefs. Wrong and right does exist but it varies in accordance to need (i.e., One place where there is little water, it is wrong to use too much, where in another place that has plenty it seems off the wall.)

Student #6

The law does not provide the basis for a person to know right from wrong. In my opinion, we all start to learn right from wrong through our parents in the earliest stages of life. As we get older we begin to maybe develop different ideas of right and wrong through friends or acquaintances. Most people learn of the law through their parents, but maybe some of the children's parents, sisters, etc. have had bad experiences with the law, and, therefore, chooses, through learned behavior, not to follow in those same footsteps.

Student #9

I believe the legal system is just a basic outline of norms of behavior. Morals are taught at home. Environment plays a key role in determining right and wrong and also past experience.

Society tends to have a great range of what is good and bad. There's a total black area but alot of gray too.

I believe alot of the values you pick up and the differentiating between good and bad are learned. Children model those around them. There isn't a clear definition of right and wrong - it's all perception.

Student #10

I do not believe that the law is the ultimate law for right and wrong. I believe this because laws are a general collection of what society feels is right and wrong for the society as a whole. The purpose is so that a community can live together peacefully. Laws can not be made to control every aspect of life because what may be right for me may be wrong for someone else, although there must be a general right and wrong for people to live peacefully together.

Student #11

I think that the laws are made to make society morally right but it obviously doesn't happen. I think that it is the way people are brought up that gives them their morals.

If a family brings up a child in a good righteous environment, he should grow up to respect the law. If a child was brought up around "the wrong kind of people," he may take that kind of moralistic view.

Student #12

I feel that our system is adequate. If it was not a lot more horrible things would be happening around us.

Whether something is right or wrong is mainly up to the individual himself. People have different beliefs and opinions and will mainly do what they want to do.

Student #13

I don't perceive them as moral standards. I know it shows the right and for the community and for our survival.

I think of morals as the way I think or the way each person believes. I don't feel you can be told how to feel.

But if the law is so meant to be morally right or wrong than people take stands against because the freedom to believe is not there.

Student #15

No not at all, many of the legal systems are not consistent in what they do. The only way you can learn between right and wrong is by trial and error. Different people and cultures have different standards of right and wrong. Something that is right to me may be very wrong to someone else.

Like you said there is no way to tell which is which. So just go by what you've learned and try to do your best.

I.C. 211 September 26, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Is there any practicality in an idealistic approach to life? Or, is it wise to accept the ordinary level of cynicism and go along with whatever moral code society actually practices?

Student #1

Personally, I feel we are all put on this earth to learn about ourselves. We have all gotten too raped up in material things. We need to stripped from these things. We can not grow spiritually when we're busy thinking of how are we going to make enough money to buy the car of our dreams. I would love to be put high on a mountain and live in a logcabin and grow my own food, etc. I need to get in touch with nature and to try to understand the meaning of life and where I need to grow. To discover ourselves is why we are here but so many of us leave the world pretty much as we entered it.

Student #2

I would have to say that for practical reasons it would be best to follow the ideals of society -- to keep yourself in the "swing of things", while at the same time, to keep yourself out of trouble. But, when it comes to your own personal lifestyle you need to learn to do your "own thing." Take, growing up for example, at the teenage years, you need to do your own thing, make your own decisions - and not follow the crowd (at least when it means keeping yourself out of trouble).

Student #3

(Just not to bother you...) I think that there is a lot of practicality to it. People should live in a way they think they should, by their ideals and not by what other people's ideals are. Even if a person's ideals are quite different from the "norm" in society, they should live by them. I think that it is a weak person who lives their life just so they aren't persecuted by society, and I don't really have too much respect for that person. I would have a great deal more respect for the person who has the courage to live their life by their own ideals and not anybody elses, even if they are really out there in left field or wacked out.

Student #5

It's nice to have your own ideals, but with the ever changing society they would be hard to adhere to and therefore is mostly impractical. Generalized ideals are more practical and flexible with change than are specific ones (i.e. "In his steps."). Having ideals and then trying to adhere to them are of an admirable quality.

Student #6

No, I do not feel that people should go along with whatever anybody else is doing because everyone has a different personality or style that sets them apart from anyone else. I believe that by not following everyone elses norms that a person finds a sense of themself and their own personal identity along with establishing self confidence in that the person can get good grades without cheating, or can be just as well liked if the person does not follow everyone else. Say, a specific dress code or a specific way of speaking, etc. If everybody did and/or said the same things, life would be very boring - no individuality. No, it is not practical.

Student #8

I believe that it is more practical to set one's way of life as far from sin or dishonesty as much as possible. In my family, dishonesty isn't part of our honor. We believe that if a person is dishonest then they have dishonored the family and themselves, which brings disgrace upon others besides themselves.

Thus, it is not practical for one to show or display a dishonest act.

Student #10

I believe that there is practicality to being idealistic. I feel this way because if there was no idealistic people things would never change for the better, just for the worst. For example if people did not care about their environment and just keep polluting it, it would be very difficult to survive in the world. Because people are idealistic we are making laws to prevent our environment from going from viable life to waste land. Idealism is what is preventing this.

Student #12

I feel that one should be as cynical as one can. Of course you should be somewhat idealistic, however not to a great point. "Going with the flow" is mainly how I have been living my life since graduation in 86. (Actually thru high school and before.) I realize that I have much more responsibilities now, but I still "go with the flow."

Student #13

I feel it is very practical to be idealistic. I am idealistic. I don't believe in "everybody does it." I think that my ideas are sometimes better than what is going on around me. Because I don't like a situation is when I'm going to try and change it, or at least make it different in my mind.

I feel the way things change and get better is by idealistic people.

Student #14

I'm not sure how to answer this one. In the example about cheating, I could never do that. The way I was brought up I have certain standards that I could never go against, but I don't see any of them getting in the way of living like the teenager of the 80's. I don't think about it very often, but I assume that in most cases I go along with the crowd until it comes to a point where I have to go against my moral laws.

Student #15

I think you should have your own ideas but maybe veer off one in a whole. I don't think you should do things just because everybody else is doing it. So yes there is some practicality to this but to a point of which each person has to determine for oneself. Such as - as you said - when just about the entire class cheats on a test so should you do it just because the rest are? That is where your own ideals and morals come into effect.

I.C. 211 October 3, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you think a decent social order is more likely to arise from clear-cut social rules that are impressed on everyone, or from a general expectation that individuals will consult their own consciences in being fair to others?

Student #1

Social order is a hard thing to attain. Although people hate laws and rules at times, I myself being one of them, laws are very necessary in our society. They protect everyone's general interest. It would be wonderful if this world was such a loving, nice place that no one needed to be told what to do. Unfortunately so, us humans are greedy and think of ourselves only and don't care about who we step on as long as we get what we want. The laws are needed to protect us from those who have no conscience.

Student #2

I wish that a decent social order could arise from everyone's own personal morals of right and wrong, but unfortunately that rarely happens. There pretty much needs to be some clear cut rules of social guidance for society to follow. Even with such rules there will still be those individuals who will choose to go against the laws and follow their own wills, but the majority will abide by the law. Even with clear cut rules, society's individuals still are able to make their own personal decisions, just under a general rule of guidance, in other words, to an _extent_.

Student #3

Personally I don't think either will produce more social order than the other. Well, rules will always be broken, but if we could "teach" a right vs. wrong type of thought into people's conscience, then maybe a "social order" could be reached. The problem is that teaching something like that is just about impossible because different people will always think differently and learn differently. So I don't see how a proper type of "social order" could be reached through teaching, but it probably stands a better chance at success than established rules.

Student #4

A decent social order must have the clear cut rules to establish boundaries for those who have no conscience. However, the decent social order must rely on the conscience of the majority because no government could ever control a rebel population. Anyway we look at it we are at each other's mercy.

Student #5

I feel that if we have a more general form of outline with limits involved, thus allowing the individual to search his conscience and decide where he wants to be. I think this is true because it will allow for the person to feel much less constricted and leading to a much lower level of rebellion than would be present in a strict social order. After all, history has proven that strict dictatorship does not work and soon falls.

Student #8

A good, clear, set of rules is a good way for a society to live together. As long as the rules are enforced the people will not have many problems.

However, my feelings are mixed ones about the topic. I also believe that a person's ideas towards another are usually good ones and that a society can probably survive with both.

Student #9

I think that a sense of clear rules as determined by social order set our rules. Humans are a social animal and learn behavior. The basic expectations are instilled upon us as children and as we get older we clarify and decide whether or not social values are important enough to us. Everyone's personal values and conscience border on what is socially acceptable. We do this to conform and belong to a group.

Student #10

I believe that a stable community is brought about by a broad outline of rule than a clear cut set. I believe this because people need room to believe, feel, and search for answers in their own way. A clear set of guidelines to do this I do not believe would be helpful. They might tend to make a person rebel because he/she needs to search for answers in a forbidden place. If people were mindless and had no need to think, reason or believe then clear cut guidelines would be OK.

Student #11

As the old saying goes, rules are made to be broken. People are going to break rules. That's the way the world runs, both good and evil. In order for a society to be all good, in terms of how we act toward each other, it is up to the individual. Our consciences can tell us what is right or wrong but we must listen to it. If we don't, we are said to have no conscience and generally do bad things. When we do listen to our conscience and do the right thing, we should feel good about it, and spread the news so that others can feel good and the whole society does right.

Student #13

I believe in using your conscience. If people are taught and allowed to explore they will return to the right way of living for them. XYZ may be the right way, for everyone but not for the individuals. When people do different things and act different ways it's a way of growth for many people. People learn by mistakes and it is important for them to be allowed to make them. In an XYZ society this would not happen.

Student #14

I think a little bit of both must be included. This is a bit like the question that asked whether we should listen to our conscience alone or to rules. In this case I think, again, that there is only so far that people can rule us. We each will decide on our own how closely we follow "rules" and how far we follow our conscience.

Student #15

I think it will come about with the second one. You should learn and then decide. People will be much happier. I don't really know which would actually be better because there is such a variance of people in the world. Some people need to be told what to do and some can do it on their own. It doesn't mean it will be right but what is actually right? Like you said this question is unanswerable!!

I.C. 211 October 10, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

When you think of the word "intelligent," does it have a moral component, or is intelligence something entirely separate from questions of right and wrong?

Student #1

To me intelligence has to be moral as well as book smarts. Someone can be moral smart but not be book smart but a person can not be book smart and not be moral smart. Intelligence is how much information a person can retain and how well they can use it.

This is not a good topic for me to write on. Maybe because I'm not into writing this card today. I usually find your topics interesting in the fact that I have a lot to say, but today I can't think. But I'm still writing. I know you want to get my wheels turning but today they are stuck!

Student #2

I had never really thought about intelligence in the moral sense, but yes I would have to say there is some relation. Intelligence does have quite a bit to do with whether one is able to make the morally right or wrong decision about something. For example, there may be a student who seems to naturally know everything but he fails classes because he chooses not to do his homework; then there is the "average" student who studies hard, does his homework and comes out with all A's. Which would you say is more intelligent? I would say the second one because he made the intelligent decision to do his studies, inevitably making him more intelligent in the long run.

Student #3

Basically, "intelligence" doesn't really mean any more to me than the fact that when I think of intelligent people I think they have the ability to reason and know more than the average amount of common knowledge. "Intelligent" people know the difference between right and wrong, but I don't think "intelligent" people have any stronger moral values than the common idiot. I guess what I'm saying is: No, I don't think that intelligence carries any moral strength, it just carries knowledge and the ability to reason.

Student #4

Intelligence seems very amoral. If not, then the two are not linked in a significant way. Some of the more intellectual people that I know have some pretty questionable moral standards. Those standards very from sexual dysfunction to poor or lack of proper manners.

So as a hand-in-hand process I'm sure that high moral standards need a degree of intelligence however, the reciprocal isn't a hard core definite.

Student #5

Intelligence doesn't necessarily contain morality, but enables the person to identify with what morals are and how and whey they should be attained. Intelligence is more a state at which a person exists which contains not only knowledge, but an understanding of that knowledge and a suitable application.

Student #6

Intelligence, in my point of view means not only what a person learns in school, i.e. 1-12 grades and/or college, but also what that person has learned as common knowledge or street knowledge. I believe that what a person learns through school, the street, and even other people helps to shape one's beliefs of their own morals and values taking into account of course, what, if any, our parents' taught us.

Student #7

There are two parts of intelligence, both the moral aspect and the good and bad. Intelligence is either found more in common sense or book smart. Some intelligence can be found larger of a percentage or smaller of the two in a person. Intelligence can be worked upon to gain more out of each aspect. If one comes easier the other should be taken into consideration and dealt with in the area of improvement.

Student #8

Intelligence to me means a person is capable of knowing what is right and what is wrong. If a person knows what is right than that person understands quite a bit of what is happening in our world. However, intelligence also can mean that a person who is so called "street smart" is better off in our world than someone who is just "book smart", because if you're "book smart" then you can't really deal with life itself.

Student #10

I believe that intelligence is the measure of how much you have learned or are able to learn on your own. I don't believe that it has much to do with right and wrong. The ability to know what is right and wrong may be intelligence, but intelligence is not establishing what is right from wrong.

Student #11

Intelligence proves a person to be wise in some aspect of any subject. Morality, I believe, can be achieved by any man whether he is a wise one or not. A person who is not exactly very bright can still be a moral or a just man. A person who is very intelligent can use his brain to do bad things or immoral things. So what I'm trying to prove is that morality and intelligence do not go hand-in-hand but both can be achieved.

Student #13

I feel intelligence has a lot to do with good and bad. When someone is intelligent I believe they should know the different between right and wrong and how right and wrong morally affect our society. By being intelligent I assume one possesses a little extra knowledge on morality. See as they may know about themselves and about others in the past more.

I believe that intelligent leaders are put in the position of important and respected people. They probably wouldn't be in that position if they were bad morally.

Student #14

Intelligence is mostly academic in nature but it does seem to control our moral character. One factor of intelligence is the capacity to reason. Frequently we must depend on our ability to reason out a problem to judge it's good or bad qualities.

Student #15

I think there are two ways to describe intelligence:

1) That someone is smart and has the ability to learn.
2) The one you are talking about.

I have always known of intelligence as having to do with the ability to learn and be helped. Another thing is that you can be a genius but not have any common sense or know everything about one subject but nothing about another. I think that an intelligent person has both these qualities. They are able to learn or are even "smart" and have the common sense to deal with things.

I.C. 211 October 12, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you think that physical power as expressed through bodily strength retains much influence in the modern world? If it does, how does it show its influence?

Student #1

Yes, I feel that physical power does have some influence for many reasons. Men with handsome bodies are put on posters and women love looking at them so they have the power of attraction. Men who are physically fit do not get picked on or pushed around. They are bouncers at bars and have authority.

People who are physically fit are looked up to for their good health. They are thought to be as motivated people. When you are physically fit you can preoccupy your mind with other things. When you aren't you just think of getting better and healthier.

Student #2

Yes, I would say physical strength does have an impact and can be influential. Power, like many other things is identified by the outside and works its way in. Everything is noticed visually first - something needs to lure attention to enable it to be looked at deeper, more in depth.

I've been told all my life, "Never judge a book by its cover," but it's impossible not to in most situations - something needs to catch the human eye, the attention.

Of course in the modern times, physical strength does count because society is so much based on competition.

Student #3

I'm not really sure about individual physical power. I mean one person being stronger than another doesn't really mean anything, and I'm not sure if it ever did. (Remember, David and Goliath?) Unfortunately, this isn't true on a national level because the strength of the different nations in the world today does come into affect. With all this talk about dinner, I've forgotten the question. Oh yea -- on an individual level physical power doesn't mean anything -- on a natural level it does.

Student #5

I think that bronze is still very much a part of our modern day society. Bulk tends to intimidate those of us who are lacking in it, especially now due to our great focus on "cosmetics". Although this is true, it is not practical. For with technology growing in leaps and bounds, it will be brains and not bronze which will dominate and with no leniency.

Student #6

I don't believe that there is as much emphasis on physical strength as there used to be. People are more concerned with the inside of themselves than before when people were concerned with muscles and how men and women were concerned with being muscular. I personally feel that a man with some muscle is sexy, but with more than that (like body builders) is uncool. It also depends on what society you grow up in, and what the stereotype of a man or a woman that person has come to accept.

Student #7

Yes, I think physical strength matters in situations with man vs. man and man vs. nature and sometimes man vs. himself. Many men who are willing to fight others are usually the stronger and bulkier ones. Other people will see a strong individual and back away even if they have done something to provoke the other. Man can defeat most of nature's forces in some aspects if the individual is strong.

Student #8

In my personal opinion, physical strength does help a person in the world today. I believe people look at someone who is strong and feel that that person can overcome problems easier, however, a mind is also important today, but if I were to hire someone to do a job, I would probably choose the stronger if they were equal in mind.

Thus, it is to a person's advantage to be powerful (strength wise) in today's world.

Student #9

I think physical strength does influence decisions in many areas. A person who is quite strong is often admired or respected for this physical trait, especially in athletics.

Physical strength can be intimidating when someone uses it to gain power. Body language can be used to exert pressure on another person, especially if the person is aggressive. Physical strength also gives a person a certain confidence about themselves. Now a days how physical power is combined with mental power is equally important. Brawn and no brain isn't respected.

Student #10

I do not believe that it matters in a day to day job. I believe that what is stressed today is intelligence, and the ability to get your ideas across clearly. I feel that your physical appearance does effect people's impression of you.

Student #12

The only reason why having large muscles and generally being "big" would matter is on a person's first impressions. It's obvious if someone is going to get in a fight and they see a huge person in front of them they would think twice. But basically it's what is inside a person to declare if he is bigger and better.

Student #13

It doesn't matter to me if a person is physically strong. It doesn't effect the way I feel towards them. I might be scared if they are too strong. If a person is too big they might intimidate people. But if a person is too small they might be intimidated easily. For myself I can honestly say physical strength affects my outlook on others.

Mental strength is much more admirable.

Student #14

Physical power is still appreciated but it doesn't really matter in the "real" world. We know so much about leverage that almost anybody can find a way to lift any object. Even to protect yourself you don't need size. Through the use of the eastern self-defenses anybody can beat the other because of technique. And then we now have guns and other weapons that don't take strength. So strength or physical power really mean nothing.

Student #15

It depends on the situation. If you are just walking down the alleys of New York I think it would be a great benefit to be physically strong, if not to prevent people from coming after you it may be of great help if they do.

But if you were in a debate your physical strength it would not do you much good because it is your brain which is being used in this instance. So I think it still has some virtue but it's not as great as it was in the days of the Odyssey or the Iliad, etc.

I.C. 211 October 17, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Is there any knowledge it would be better for humans not to have? The question is not about things it is impossible to know, like what's going to happen in the future, but about information we really might discover, but which we would be worse off for having.

Student #1

The study of human genes and DNA, etc. is becoming more and more in depth.

This will be a very touchy thing to have to deal will in the future. We will perfectionize physically to the extent of all possibilities. We will be changing the course of the world. Mothers are already capable of learning of problems having to do with their fetus and having the choice of aborting them or not.

Student #2

No, I would have to say that there is not any knowledge that would be better off unknown. Every bit of varied knowledge in the world is best known in order to let the world grow with the times. Just because something is known doesn't mean that it will be accepted and/or applied by all who obtain such knowledge. Knowledge is applicable to someone's lives and not to other - so the more known the better. Some will disagree with this question due to the knowledge of making bombs, etc., (that may someday destroy our world) but I must say that it is a fact of life - there will always be good and bad in the world, and it is just one more test to be given to man. (Will he blow up our world?)

Student #3

Yes, the knowledge of good and even - if we didn't have that we would still be in Eden right?

I'm not really sure actually, it's really not a question of what type of knowledge we should or shouldn't have. The problem with knowledge is what you do with it, how you react to it. Like you just talked about atomic bombs, the problem isn't that we know how to make them, the problem is we don't know how to handle that knowledge. Do you know what I mean?

Student #4

We, as a society, should be aware that there are subjects that would be better left untouched. One of these things might be chemistry. Although chemistry has found a home in many areas of good, such as medicine. However, were it not for chemistry, we wouldn't have toxic waste, ozone breakdown, chemical warfare, or pollution (non-biodegradable). Granted the quality of life has improved by chemistry but the short falls have a great negative effect. Besides I hate stoichiometry problems. 'Nough said.

Student #5

I think it would be better not to know man's true origin. Discovering this I feel would unleash great disasters on society. The same with some of our war technology that we could definitely be without and it is questionable if we are going to live with it.

Student #6

I think that for some people the idea of knowledge that we would be worse off from knowing would be like some person (people) who believe that the Bible is "truth," but if there was evidence - beyond a word of doubt, that there was another way for people to come into existence without having a God or an Adam and Eve - that those people would just go over the edge. Also, it would be rather boring to "know" about these things because if you know everything about a subject(s) then there's nothing left to wonder about.

Student #7

Yes, I think that is why no one accurately understands or knows all aspects of death and/or what could have or will become of a person. Death has many views which could be pleasant or horrible. Many people say they know or have experienced and say it is beautiful, but how is one to know until it happens? A person becomes or will become what he/she is produced themselves into and one should say this is what should be or could be.

Student #8

There is one thing we really shouldn't find out about and that is the secret of Stonehedge. If we learn what it was built for, time travel or as a calendar of years. If however, it was for time travel and we learned how to use it, people would mess up the world even worse than it already is. They would change the past or change their futures.

Student #10

Yes, I believe there is information, knowledge that we would be better off not knowing. I feel that nuclear power and bombs are something that we would be better of not knowing. I believe if we can perfect this we will be better of not knowing. The people in this world already do not know how to handle what we have peaceably. How would we handle it? Would it be the end of this world if we knew?

Student #11

At times it is sometimes better that information or knowledge of something is withheld from somebody for certain reasons that could ruin that person.

The old saying goes, "What they don't know won't hurt them.", and this could be true but when and if they do find out later, it could be much worse than if you told them up front, so, at times, it could be appropriate to use lack of knowledge.

Student #12

I feel that one particular piece of information (knowledge) that we really do not need to know is nuclear weapons. I agree that we should be able to defend our country, but I feel it is almost getting to the point of no turning back, and that to me is scary because we are going to keep making more and more weapons and who knows what the outcome will be. Is it really worth it?

Student #13

A knowledge that would be better not to know is knowledge about nuclear war and weapons. If we had no knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons than the world would not be in the trouble and we wouldn't live in a threat.

I do believe that there is knowledge that we were not meant to know and I believe that it is important for us not to know it.

Someday our knowledge will be so great there will be NO turning back and it will be too later for all of civilization.

Student #14

Of course, we've already learned some. Why did we need to learn about nuclear bombs? Now we know how to blow up the world, what good does this do us? Now we have to worry about what terrorist is going to start world war III. We don't need, and should not try to learn how to live forever. We've already found that living longer only caused a population explosion that can not continue.

Student #15

Nuclear energy - if we had never invented it then we would never have to worry about going to war as much. Before when we went to war people and the world would still be here. But with the nuclear bombs there will be nothing but bacteria living. Even though this is supposed to be how the animals, mammals and insects of the world came about before, so maybe it would be good to have another "clean" start. But I don't think that science and bombs, etc. are always good to know.

I.C. 211 October 19, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

How do you regard conversation? Is it simply one of life's light pleasures? Is it a means for serious learning? Is it a waste of time? What is it and what should it be?

Student #1

The majority of my conversations lead to my further developing of myself and what I'm truly made of. By having conversations I learn about things and what makes others tic. Without a form of conversation I would go nuts. I have to talk and to talk a lot. It relieves stress, it strengths my beliefs. Without conversation there could be rarely any communication. We would no longer need others, we could have computers and still basically be satisfied. By the way, what is a "good conversation to you?

Student #2

Conversation is many things - it is pleasure and it is also a serious way of learning.

Through speaking people are able to learn and make interpretations, inferences, and judgements. Conversation is important in many ways.

Like in Plato, dialogue is a process a elimination, leaving an integration of comments - possibly resulting in what is called the "ultimate truth."

Student #3

Conversation is and can be any of those. Conversation can take many different "levels." A lot of our conversation is just a waste of time, some of it is educational, and sometimes when you're with the right people (discussing the right type of topics) conversation can be challenging and rewarding. You know, conversation can be what ever the people talking want it to be.

Student #4

Conversation is important but, is rarely ever achieved. Most times people go on tangents to avoid the serious eye to eye that comes with conversation.

Many times people go out to lunch or dinner to avoid the conversation. The actual conversation, should it arise, doesn't concern me. However, my concern is what makes people avoid it?

Student #8

To me, conversation is an important way of learning. I believe a person learns quite a bit from talking to someone who has lived through it. I learned a lot from a neighbor who was in Viet Nam that I couldn't learn from books. Conversation also, however, lets a person's mind think more to come up with answers to someone's questions; and it lets them voice their opinion of the topic in question.

Student #9

I consider conversation to be very important to our society. However, conversation takes on many forms because of social roles. Their is the meaningless social chatter amongst acquaintances and in formal situations. There is the pleasure and meaningful conversation between good friends. The conversation between friends is varied in intensity. There can also be conversation between like professions on philosophy and practices. A good conversation is only as good as the listener who really hears your thoughts.

Student #10

Conversation is important because it is a way for people to convey what they know to others. I feel that this is important because knowing what someone else thinks or feels will help you to understand how you think and feel. Conversation may also help to shape thinking and feelings. Through conversation we learn to think and speak logically.

Student #11

Conversation can be considered as a learning experience or a chance to learn. I believe this but that just can't be it. We walk to remember back and enjoy some old memories and sometimes we converse just to do it for lack of nothing else to do. I think the most important conversations are ones in which learning is experienced. And these, too, are the one's we remember.

Student #12

Conversation to me is a way of life. A person uses it throughout each day of their lives. It is a way of learning and basically a way of understanding and interpreting another person's point of view. I feel without conversation a person could almost feel lonely. It's a way of life.

Student #14

I feel that conversation is an important tool in teaching and learning. Conversation seems to be one of the main ways I pick up new information, it is probably one of the main was anyone picks up new information. When I hear something that interests me I then go and find out more about it. Although I then head to books, I feel I learn best from conversations.

I.C. 211 October 24, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

How do you think most people form their opinions? Do they base them on facts, or do they base them on the opinions of other people? Is the general opinion of society a good basis on which to make important decisions?

Student #2

I think that even though people are told not to form opinions based on what others say, they unfortunately do. I feel that's wrong - and people should go about forming their own opinions by facts or their own inner emotions/decisions.

In nine times out of ten, I would say it is okay to make a decision based on the general opinion of society because you know it's "safe" and you won't be outcast; but it may end up going against your own moral values. In that situation it's not good.

Student #3

Opinions are really the type of thing that is made up from a number of different parts. Facts are usually part of the reasoning behind opinions, but often opinions also are generated from what the person feels, what the person is hearing and what type of opinions people that the first person looks up to have. A lot of my own opinions I feel just come from what (I think) I know and what I feel.

As far as basing society on the general popular opinion; I guess in a lot of cases you have to base things on the most popular opinion, or where the most agreement is. Unfortunately this is always the best thing to do but I can't think of any other way to do it.

Student #4

People base opinions on both other people's "thoughts" and personal feelings. However, most often it seems that opinion is really a product of peer pressure. People express, seemingly, the "how to fit in" mode of opinion rather than a heart felt direction.

Unfortunately, opinion runs the world. Most voters vote on hearsay rather than knowledge or preference. The scary part is that these decisions allow Bigger Morons into power positions that make things worse for the morons that voted for them.

Solution: Don't vote, don't think, don't listen or talk. Better yet, we can all wake up and realize it's all the plant earth way. We've been doing it for "E"ons.

Student #7

People form their opinions by gathering information, observations and their feelings. Many people feel their opinions are facts, but their facts could very well be an opinion. Many people base their thoughts and opinions on different things due to the diversity of individuals. The basis of opinions should be used with discretion whether it is based upon the general consensus or actual surveys or reports. Even this is a wide based opinion.

Student #8

The question you asked us to write about today is a hard one. The question itself totally blew my mind and my response to it isn't a valid one, so I'm not writing it down. I'm truly sorry about this and it won't happen again.

Student #9

For the most part I believe people form their general opinions from what others say and hearsay. Too often rather then go by facts, we go by what others say. Maybe this is because we need to conform to the general consensus.

I would rather draw my opinions - analyzing my own thoughts, some facts, and what I all ready know. I don't rely on others to form my opinions.

When we let the opinion of a few, without any concrete information, decide the general decision it is usually a weak decision. Too often we get wrapped in our own opinions to be objective.

Student #10

People form their opinions from what other people think and what the facts are. People pick what they feel is the truth. I believe that using the opinion of a whole society is good when the decision affects the society as a whole not an individual. An individual should make decision concerning him/herself by their own opinion not others.

Student #12

Opinions are based on how one particular individual feels about the matter which is being discussed. It is his own personal feelings.

I feel that one should not follow a crowd (meaning following the opinions of others) but make his own decisions based on how the individual feels himself.

Student #13

I think fact is an important factor in making your opinion. But I don't believe it is the whole thing. In making an opinion I think the things involved are facts, others opinions and past experiences.

I believe the general opinion is not the reason to do something. I believe it is important to take a look at the whole pie before deciding. I feel there is a medium that would satisfy most of the people and not necessarily go along with the general public.

Student #14

My opinions are formed when I here something or read something and become interested in the topic. Then I go any try to find more information on the subject to base my opinions. A lot of general opinions are untrue. The whole AIDS scare is very important but so many people are more scared then the facts tell us we should be.

Student #15

I think people form their opinions mostly by what others think. Myself I put both together - facts and what others think because some opinions are good and some facts don't always seem correct nd vice versa. Opinions can be very self-generated by the influence of your life. Your parents have a great influence in your life and how you think about things.

I don't really know if it is safe to make a decision on the general opinion of society. Sometimes they can be right or maybe not or even somewhere in between.

I.C. 211 October 26, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Who should choose the books children read? Should the government have any part in choosing them? Should teachers have equal, or greater, weight as compared to parents? Who should choose?

Student #1

Parents should choose the stories children read. They are the ones capable of dealing out punishment, so they are probably the most influential and the ones capable of succeeding in getting their children to do what they like.

Although children do not stay celled in their homes and eventually make friends and go to school. Parents can not be with their children at all times and thus books become more flavorful because they are the forbidden ones. So children's curiosity will search these books out and read them. you can't prevent publication of these books because that is censorship.

Student #2

I think a combination of the government, parents and teachers should all have a say in what our children should read.

When it comes to educating our children through stories I feel teachers should have more say, because they are more knowledgeable in child development and perception of their learning, than the parents. When at home, I think the parents should get to choose what their kids should read, but I definitely don't think they should cut out fictional stories. It may not be true, but its enjoyment (and that can be explained and I'm sure understood by small children).

Student #3

I think that government and teachers can offer assistance in the choosing of material for children, but ultimately the children's parents have to be able to say my child will hear these stories or whatever. I think that government and teachers have a responsible part of making sure proper material of all different sorts are available for children but neither should have the power to override the parents choice. To do that wouldn't even seem possible in today's society.

Student #4

The basic choice in selecting books for children should be that: Basic. However, the general parent isn't from academia nor is the child psychologist with no kids receptive to children's needs and tendencies.

The choice should be a group effort and possibly a voted selection. Even then, the final screening should be done on a local level. As put forth about college students, the low income

Student #4 (continued)

area kids may not be as affluent to high intelligent oriented script.

Then, let the kids judge, mine do. Bugs has a lot more to say then Smurfs, etc.

Student #5

I think that the children should be allowed to choose what books they want to read and have them discussed by parents, sort of a PG reading system. For they will learn about all of that which we don't want them to on their own via the street. So it is better to let them learn about it in the home where you have more control over things and you can council them on what is right and wrong.

Student #7

Government, teachers and parents all should have an input on what books children should read, but parents will and should have all discretion. I feel the government and teachers should have recommendations towards some books to vary out others that aren't acceptable for a child. If the parents don't take the time or put the care into it as some do, the child usually gets the influence or requirements from his/her teachers.

Student #9

I believe that parents and teachers jointly share the responsibility of choosing books for children. In order to become widely read and literate, children need to be exposed to a variety of styles, authors and a mixture of modern and traditional literature. Books serve a multitude of purposes. Some stories need to be discussed - with fears expressed and talked out, etc. Children need to play and imagination is part of play. Reading encourages imagination because you can try many things. But in choosing books they need to be age appropriate.

Student #10

I feel that the public school boards should choose the books that are in schools with the input of teachers and parents. Parents should help their children choose books to read and screen them. If a child feels that he/she must absolutely read a book the parent doesn't want, then to them the book should not be read until the child is old enough for the topic.

Student #11

I believe that children's books should be used to teach good things to the kids. I guess the government does and should control which books should be taught. (At least in public school systems.) I don't believe that a teacher has more control than the parent has but it is up to the teacher to teach the kids to do what is right but the parents must make sure of it.

Student #12

I think the decision of what children should and should not be able to read is mainly up to the parents. The reason for this is they are bringing the child up, therefore they should decide what kind of "base" the child should receive.

Student #13

I think it should be the parents and the teachers decision. There really isn't a perfect way for people to teach the world. The kids need to grow up knowing about reality. I think they should see happy endings, but sad endings too. They can't be expected to make it in this world if they believe everyone and everything is truthful and honest.

Student #14

I feel very strongly that each parent must choose the way that their children's morals are created. Thus I feel that parents have the greatest say in choosing children's books. But I will go so far as to say that as a teacher I would control what was allowed in my classroom. I don't go for the Halloween or Freddie Cruger movies but I would allow the fairy tales we spoke of.

Student #15

I think it is up to the child's parents what their child should read. I mean, it's their child shouldn't they be able to bring their child up the way they want. And if that means letting them listen or read fairy tales with danger in them well fine and vice versa. I don't see all that much wrong with danger and not having everything always happy - it's more like the real world, which isn't always happy and go lucky.

I.C. 211 October 31, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you think it's possible to find a core of moral values that would be agreed upon by all people, or do cultural distinctions cause people to have such different perspectives on right and wrong that no single moral stance could be accepted by everyone?

Student #1

I don't think that there could ever be a moral stance that everyone agreed on. What I think is right is not necessarily what the next person thinks is right. If we all had the common set of values we would not need the rules that we have now and we would not have the people breaking the laws like we do now.

We have several rules as a society that we think are right and we still have people breaking them. We could never come to such a consensus. If we all had moral values that were similar we would not have the culture differences that we have.

Student #2

I feel that no general moral stance can prevail in a single culture. There is no one central core of moral value in an individual society, for each person has his/her own personal beliefs of right vs. wrong. There can be governing laws in rule of a single culture, but general laws of the state are much more different than personal values/morals. Each person makes his own decisions of morals and if they're strong enough nothing could stand in the way of them, especially not a general moral stance in society, because which is stronger - your own personal beliefs or what the majority of the public beliefs?

Student #3

I think that there is a "moral core" that could be agreed upon by all cultures. This so called core wouldn't be very big because it is virtually impossible to get many people to agree on everything, but there are some "morals" that I think everyone would agree on. I think that everybody would agree that murder is wrong and those who didn't would either be lying or a very small minority of one particular culture. I don't know now, the more I think about the less I feel that this "moral core" would be agreed upon. People who opposed morals like murder and honesty and so on can't be many in numbers and therefore don't count.

Student #5

I don't think that cultures are so opposed that they don't overlap. There are some morals that are common to all but may be in different forms. There are some groups that are farther away from say a group, and in respect to some morals, but closer than others.

Student #6

I don't believe that ever would we be able to find a core of values because there are too many people who want to do whatever they fell like doing or feeling - but that isn't saying that a lot of others wouldn't want it, but it just wouldn't work - eventually people get bored or want some excitement or something - I don't know. An example of this being already demonstrated was who in the Bible, when the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments, people could not and did not follow them. I just don't believe that a culture will ever totally agree on morals that everyone could follow.

Student #7

I think you could find a few aspects of moral stands but not all could be agreed upon, because of cultural differences and how each individual is affected by these and given their similarities and differences. Agreement on all basic thoughts is hard to come by with a mixture of all different backgrounds and ways of thinking. Open-mindedness helps and is exemplified through agreement procedures.

Student #9

Because of the diversity of ethnic origins and culture there isn't a possibility to adapt a set of universal morals. To even try to do so we must take into account all the religions, (Jewish, Christianity, Hinduism etc.) customs and traditions, as well as ethnic background. Although some may share customs it is impossible to expect all cultures to share the same values.

Cultural diversity makes us all individuals and should remain so. Cultures have evolved around traditions and customs. To adapt to a set of universal morals, means readjusting the entire social and cultural set up. There are also geographical barriers to consider.

Student #10

No, I don't believe that a single stand on morals would be acceptable. Education and culture helps individuals to discover themselves and values. The only way there could be an agreement is if people were all education and exposed to the exact same culture or were given nothing at all, no education or culture. There can be a general consensus on what is acceptable.

Student #11

I don't believe that we can have just one core of morals that the entire world would understand and believe in. I do believe that certain societies have their own set of morals. Someone from Europe might not have the same morals as someone from Harlem but both places have their own respective set.

Student #12

I think one culture can have moral values, because everyone needs to have some sort of value whether it be religious, or even just socially.

If there are 2 different groups of people with completely different values or outlooks on a particular situation, I feel they should at least show each other their differences. No one should already make up their minds before hearing the other person's side.

Student #13

I do not believe there is a moral standard that can make every one happy. I believe that the reason is the different cultures people have different beliefs and worship different ways. For example abortion. We vote to make it legal but there are people that still fight it.

I don't believe we can make it right for everyone so I believe we need to make allowances and room for change.

Student #14

I think that most people already have an overlapping value system. Most cultures feel that murder and stealing are wrong. But just looking here we can find that even here there are great differences. The Indians felt that the land belonged to the land so how could the American people steal (buy) it from them. As far as murder - I feel that abortion is murder but others feel that it is a right of the mother.

Student #15

I don't think you could ever figure out one core of values to live by. Society and all of its different cultures would be the major problem against this. Each culture can have their own morals but usually two different cultures don't agree about certain morals. If one ever did try to find a set of morals of which everybody could live under it would be worthless because the morals themselves would be so broad that they wouldn't exact enough to be worth having. So why have them at all.

I.C. 211 November 2, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

What part do you think passion plays in the good life? Are there different kinds of passion, some good and some not so good? What is the best form of passion, and what is the worst? Does passion need always to be kept under control, and it if does, what controls it?

Student #1

I personally feel passion is a very important part of life. Passion is when you get to know a person like no one else knows them. Passion opens up the world to a person in a brand new way. It adds color to the scenery. To go through life without passion you have not fully discovered your soul. It's through passion with the help of someone else that things are brought to view.

Passion may be good and bad passion is such a strong feeling that it may be hard to control. When you forget that passion is shared is when passion becomes an ugly creature.

Student #2

Passion, no matter for what, is a longing desire or lust for something. I cannot say whether it is right or wrong, or good or bad, but I could say it is natural. Wanting and desiring are normal, healthy characteristics of human nature.

I do think they (passions) should be controlled, but not denied (they must be accepted by the one yearning). They should be acknowledged, but not carried out for fulfillment if it means harming or damaging another. To say, not to fulfill one's desires if it harms himself is absurd, because everything in life involves risk and chance of self-harm.

Student #3

Well, I think that there is different types of passion. There is the type of "passion" that is like enthusiasm. For example, when we say someone has a real passion for something, we don't usually mean passion in the ultimate sense, we mean that they like it and are real enthusiastic about it. Then there is the intimate type of passion between people. I think that this is the type of passion where people lose control more than they other type. The latter type of passion usually is controlled by emotion and not mind and reasoning. (But then maybe the other is the same way.)

Student #4

Passion is highly individualized. In other words, it cannot be predicted or planned in such a way that it becomes a step by step procedure. It should be discretionary but spontaneous at the same time. I don't believe real passion cannot by spontaneous. To keep it under control would be a crime, if in fact two people or the person involved was agreeable. But, on the other hand, like drugs that intensify your personality. The problem here is what if that person is an *****? Everything needs a checking device.

Student #5

Passion needs to be controlled, channeled, or if it is not the "appetite" will be unleashed with all control relinquished. It is, however, necessary to have, for it promotes our drive in live and in this way aids progression.

Student #6

Yes, I believe that there are many different forms of passion. There can't be a sense of passion pertaining to making love to somebody solely (good passion) and lets say a passion to kill somebody - obviously negative. There are different froms of passion, and how they are carried out is according to how a person's morals and values are, different situational and environmental factors around that may somehow justify or rather help explain why a person would do what he/she did. I also believe that it if is a "good" person (which is also determined by other people's definition) that people should follow it if no one is hurt in the process, but "bad" passions should be kept under control.

Student #7

There are many kinds of passion. The individual controls passion and they know how and to what extent passion should be carried out to. Some exceed others opinions upon that topic and end up in discrepancies. Passion to an individual is seen either as good or bad and to what extremes it is carried to. Society plays and places much emphasis on terming whether passion is good or bad.

Student #8

I believe passion is important in people's lives. There are different forms of passion such as - a passion for food - the passion for excellence in a certain field of study - and the passion of loving someone.

All the different forms of passion are important in life. Without them one's life would be incomplete. If a person can never have the passion of loving someone else, then a large part of their life has been cut out.

Student #9

I think passion is a good form because it is a genuine interest, like, or devotion to something. Like any other emotion, excessive passion can be harmful when it infringes on the rights of others or limits self growth. Passion is held in check by reason and rationale. Sometimes we just have to let go of reason and be free. Passion can be uninhibited and bring out our innermost creativity and artistic talents.

Student #10

Passion is something that you really love. For example, "I have a passion for chocolate." This means that I love chocolate. If I eat it all the time and could not restrain myself for it then that would be an obsession. I feel that passion is a good thing to have but not if you have an obsession with it. I think that there is a fine line between the two. Some people may say they have a passion for chocolate and eat it excessively. That is probably an obsession.

Student #11

Passion shared between two people can be excellent. There is good passion and bad passion, lust, to control passion, one must realize that it takes 2 to tango and if one doesn't want to, it could be rape. There is a time and place for everything and knowing this is how you can control your passion. there is a saying that reads "Passion could be poison.", this means that someone can take advantage of your passion to get at something else. This is where we must be careful.

Student #13

In my life passion is very important. I have different passions. I don't think passion is just a word that relates to love, I believe it is a drive that needs to be acknowledged and fulfilled. I have a great passion to become a nurse. This is an incredible drive inside myself that I need to carry out. Another passion is my need for companionship. I think passion needs to be kept on a string, but definitely needs to be expressed. Losing control is important at times.

Student #14

Passion, to me, is the desire to do something. When I think of passion I think of it as the desire to do good things. I really don't think of it as bad, bad I think of a compulsion. So to go from there the only control of passion that I must exert would be to keep myself from spreading myself too thin, that I would be harming myself and not giving enough to any of my passions. For compulsions, it is up to my moral character to tell me that something is wrong and not to do it.

Student #15

Passion is a very hard subject to figure out if there is too much or not enough. In some circumstances it is good to be passionate about something - like if you are defending it. Others it is good to keep your passions under control. I don't really know how I keep my passions under control - probably by talking sense into my head, that it would never happen or it's not worth it, etc. Passion is something that should be contemplated by people very often because there is so much of it in the world.

I.C. 211 November 7, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Do you expect your children, if and when you have them, to think about learning and knowledge in the same way you do? If not, how do you think they will be different? Do you hope that on these subjects they will have views different from your own?

Student #2

I think they (my children) will think about learning and knowledge in a different way than I, because they will grow up in a different time (different day and age). Every generation varies in all aspects of life due to the time they grow up.

I don't hope my children's perceptions of knowledge will be different than mine - I want them to at least realize its importance. Hopefully, their perceptions will resemble mine because of the way I raise them within the boundaries of my own beliefs. I will not impress my perceptions upon my children, though.

Student #3

Well, I would imagine that there would be some difference. Certain elements of knowledge are forever changing, while other parts and foundations of knowledge remain the same. Because of this I would think that there would be some difference. As far as learning and having agreeing views of knowledge, I can't really say. People develop their own ways of learning, whether or not any children I might have learn in the same fashion, I don't know. I would expect that since I would be the one raising my children that even without trying I would instill a certain amount of my own values and views in the child, but the child's views could also be different.

Student #4

I don't expect them in terms of demanding that they think about learning and knowledge like me. But, I do expect in terms of history repeating itself, general significant other influence, etc. that their thoughts and aspirations will parallel somewhat closely to mine. I personally realize my deficits in learning and understanding, which is all i hope for them. Indeed knowing yourself and your abilities/limitations is the starting point. Anything after that is gravy (TRUTH or not).

Student #5

I would imagine that from myself bringing them up that their knowledge/views will reflect my own in some ways, but it is expected that it will vary simply related to different circumstances and stimuli they will experience in growing that were different than my own. It doesn't bother me to think that they might not agree with what I do, and I hope to promote their individuality, as long as they can put reason behind what they think.

Student #6

I think that when I have children I will respect whatever ideas or beliefs they believe in as long as the child is right as far as say for example: a black person is a nigger - no, that's wrong. I would hope that my child (children) have the same views as I do about education, and I will require my children to at least get a high school diploma. But as a child gets older he/she develops a set of their own ideas and beliefs nd I feel that it is important for a parent to let their child grow and develop their own sense of identity.

Student #7

Yes, I expect my children to have views of education the way I do and I feel they will because in my family education is viewed very highly and almost every member has excelled in finishing 4 years or more of college and I feel my future husband will share the same thoughts. If my children think differently on the topic of education I will stand by him/her, but as a parent I will place great emphasis on education and how he/she will succeed.

Student #12

I think that when I do have children they will basically be shown the way to knowledge in basically the same way. Developing knowledge will come by learning in school, the home, even day to day activities. I also feel that I will be able to help "my children" because of my mistakes which I have learned.

Student #13

I hope my children look at having knowledge and learning the same. I hope they realize how important it is to know what is going on and way. I hope they don't take for granted the ability to learn and to achieve a high level of knowledge.

Knowledge is the stuff you know. Learning is the process they go through to get knowledge. I hope they know the difference and not take it for granted.

Student #14

I hope that my children have their own ideas for everything. I want to model for my children what I feel so that they can see my values but they can also see other's values; and finally make an educated decision on their own. Of course until they have had the experiences to make such a decision I will recommend to them strongly that they follow my lead.

Student #15

My children will probably think like me to a point. Their learning and knowledge should be different from my own because they are going to be living in a different time. If my children would like to study philosophy or anything about this subject then they will be encouraged to. But I can't really predict the future and what my kids will be like because I, myself am still growing up.

I.C. 211 November 9, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

What is your prediction about the future of the United States as a political and economic power? Do you think the nation has seen its days of greatest influence, or, are there times of greater influence to come? Does it matter to you whether the United States is the richest or the most powerful nation? If so, how?

Student #2

My prediction about the U.S. as a political empire is that it will basically stay the same as now. I think its days of great influence have gone by. Our government is pretty much being run the same way each year.

Yes, I care about our nation as an empire, but I don't overly concern myself with thinking about its future development/changes. I know I probably should be more concerned with where we as a national empire are going, but I just feel that there is no predictability or follow through - what happens, happens.

Student #3

Well, the world is only so big, so countires like the U.S. and Russia can only politically grow to a certain extent. I don't really know if our political power will increase. I believe that our economic power (with proper guidance) is able to continue growing, and I think that it can reach the worldwide level of what it once was. As far as my own personal belief; I don't really know, I guess to some degree it does matter how much political power we have, I think that our economic power is more important though. I've never really cared much about political power but I do realize its importance.

Student #4

The U.S. has a positive future in terms of growth. The best is yet to come as an influence around the world.

Rich and powerful? Yes it needs to be for the simple fact that if it went broke, national bankruptcy may lead to an overthrow. This would be the demise of the world leader in democracy.

I personally feel that time will tell but for the mean time we have to deal with what the past has left us.

Student #6

I think that someday it can and will be politically and economically great if we can get a president in there who cares about _all_ different classes of people. There has to be a person in office who has been - shall we say "on both sides of the fence" financially and economically.

Student #6 (continued)

Being a part of a rich and powerful nation would be nice, but not at the expense of the people involved. For example, there are so many people in this world that are barely existing on what they government is giving them to live on. Children aren't continuing their education because programs are being cut for education, older people are eating dogfood and God knows what else and living on the street and why - because we want to be rich and powerful. It doesn't make sense, we have to worry about the people here and now - not what may happen 6 months or more from now.

Student #7

I have no idea what it will become due to changing times, I think everyday is a growing influence and of course I want the United States to be a rich, powerful and growing nation so it will maintain and prosper. I feel its constitution is doing fine and the United States can hold its own. The U.S. will continue to work out its problems and try to succeed further but not everything can be conquered due to the fact of different people which intertwines with opinions and actions which can be detrimental or benefit the nation as a whole.

Student #8

I believe that the country will lose the economic race but will be healthy politically. We should cut down on military spending and put the money towards helping the economy.

I personally do care about the country's well being and I really would like to see it strive like it once did, but I probably won't be around long enough to see it happen, because it's going to take quite a few years for that to be accomplished.

Student #9

My prediction for the U.S. is that we are on our way out of becoming a major economic and world power. I think we need to become more of an introverted country. I say this because we need to fix our own internal problems before fixing the world's. Problems of the poor, illiteracy, the deficit, etc., keep multiplying while we invest in other countries. The time has come for other leading countries to take over some of the burdens. We need to repair the damages done from years past in order to remain a respected and notable world power. We aided those countries needing help and I don't think we should let our national pride stand in the way of asking for some help.

Student #10

I feel that the United States has seen its last days of influence unless it changes some things. U.S.A. has to start putting money back into the society instead of spending the money on the defense to defend other countries. The USA has to start using its natural resource to upgrade the economy. If the usA does not start looking to internal affairs more than external affairs I feel that things will decay more than they have.

Student #11

I think the United States' future is quite stable. I think its influence on other nations will still be very high, but I hope it's not because of our nuclear defense. It does matter to me that we are the richest and most powerful nation but I don't want us ever to "push the button."

I'd like to see our power used in all wellness for the earth, not to destroy it.

Student #12

My prediction of the future of the United States will continue growing, both politically and economically. It scares me, however, that we are going to have too much military forces. I say this because we seem to be adding to our military and not trying to get rid of these nuclear weapons. Other countries are building their military. It's almost like a race. We are either going to ruin ourselves or the other countries will do it for us. We are moving towards the Jetsons.

Student #14

As far as I can see we have probably seen our height. I think that there will soon be only 2 classes of political powers, those being the developed worlds and the underdeveloped worlds. I can't see anybody taking the top seat anymore because all information today is shared by all countries because we believe in the idea of morality. Meaning that any information might help another person. As far as I'm concerned I really don't think it matters very much because we are so set in our ways, nothing much is going to change.

I.C. 211 November 14, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Does time obliterate suffering, so that after the passage of years it really doesn't matter any more? Can you feel sympathy for Roman parents whose child died in a plague, or did that happen so long ago that it doesn't any longer count? If time does wipe out the significance of suffering, how long does it take?

Student #1

I think time takes away the pain of suffering. After a period of time the sympathy leaves but the empathy is always there. Empathy can not be taken away because you can always put yourself in someone else's shoes.

Sympathy leaves depending on the individual and the circumstance. As long as the person is involved in your life somehow even if it's just through newspaper articles, you have sympathy because you are thinking about them and as long as you can think about them you can sympathize with them. As long as you can not control and understand your sympathy, it will stay with you

Student #2

I feel that time will make pain go away, but only because it makes one put into his/her past. The memory of the suffering will not be forgotten.

I do not feel sorry for Roman parents who lost a child, not because it was so long ago, but because I did not personally know the family and I was not personally involved in the situation.

"Time heals all wounds." This is a quote from a song. Do I believe it's true? I must say that I feel time can heal a wound on the surface of the skin, but even if it doesn't leave a scar on the outside, the would still lies below skin level. Pain and suffering is never simply "skin deep."

Student #3

I don't really know. Suffering is an individual thing. Some people wouldn't care about the child that was killed, but others would. Personally I don't think time obliterates suffering, it possibly just makes it a little more tolerable. I had a friend hat was just recently killed in an accident, and it really tends to get to me when I think about it now. But I know that in time it will not be as bad as it is now, but I'll never really overcome the suffering or pain that is occurring now.

Basically as time goes on the suffering decreases, but I don't think you can ever escape it. At least not from my personal point of view.

Student #4

Too much removal to care about Roman parents whose child died in a plague. In fact most people are done feeling sorry in 20 or 30 minutes after hearing about a 747 airplane crash. I think that we, as a people of today, are so geared up that we don't have time to dwell on non-immediate subjects. Unless that plane had a friend or relative on it, it's of almost no concern. It's of no concern, that is, until we find ourselves boarding the next plane bound for windshear city. Then we have rememberance. Perhaps selfish, but still rememberance.

Roman parents? No - no concern at all.

Student #5

In reference to the example, in order to really relate to those Roman parents, you must be experiencing something similar at present. Now these feelings of remorse, etc. are eased with time because new situations arise, and you adjust to your new situation and come accustomed to it. This is not to say that time heals the total wound, because it doesn't, it just allows you to contain, deal with the sadness in your life, but you can still reflect on it later on and remember the pain and still feel it.

Student #6

Of course time does not wipe out the significance of suffering. Whether someone died 10 years ago from cancer or 10 hours ago does not make it any easier for the people involved as a whole family, friends, but also for just our fellow Americans. Everyone should have a sense of brotherhood no matter what the time or place is concerning an issue, such as this one. Human suffering hurts just as much if something happened to a specific set of people 2,000,000 years ago or it if happened 20 seconds ago to the people in this society and time. People still have feelings and/or the ability to feel.

Student #7

No, time does not wipe out the significance of suffering. I feel sympathy for many incidents more moving such as the exterminating of the Jewish people. I feel for the Roman parents about their child falling fatal due to a plague, but the plague couldn't have been stopped back then due to medical reasons, but Hitler and his followers could have. Many people suffer and most hear about it and feel for them for a unrecorded time period, but sometimes it is just placed in the back of the mind. So people can go on and learn from it instead of dredging up over and over again. So the pain or whatever feelings there are don't subside.

Student #8

I believe that time doesn't obliterate suffering. If a person close to you dies, then time will never make the pain and suffering go away. I as a person feel anguish for all who have died an unnecessary death throughout time. I think everyone has a little compassion within themselves for others, even the persons of long ago.

Time can never heal the wounds of love and death. People over time learn to deal with it better, but never fully get over the pain.

Student #9

I don't believe time obliterates suffering but it does ease the suffering and the loss. In the example you gave of a Roman mother losing her child in the plague it doesn't really matter. I can't identify with a time that long ago. However, using the Jews of WWII would be a more reasonable example. We will never forget the atrocities done to prisoners during WWII - both the Jewish people and others. The loss and pain has eased with time but will always remain. The death of someone isn't easy to forget. The passing of time allows a healing and acceptance of death.

Student #10

Time doesn't stop suffering. Time lessens it. With time people tend to put things on a back shelf in their mind, but because it is in the back of their mind doesn't mean that they aren't suffering. The person just doesn't think of it day to day. Suffering only occurs when the thing that has happened is relevant to you. If it is in the distance you may feel bad but it doesn't mean that you're suffering.

Student #11

It is very possible of time to obliterate suffering, but I think it depends on what point of view you see. For example, my grandmother died 4 years ago and I accept it. It wasn't easy at first but after some time, I accepted it. To my grandfather, it will take more time for him to accept it. I can't tell you an amount of time it takes to "get over" death because every person is different. I can't say I don't feel sorry for a Roman mother whose baby died by plague because that's a terrible thing. But it happened so long ago that it almost doesn't matter.

Student #14

In my experience, time does not obliterate suffering. As for the Roman parents, I must say that I don't feel very much for them but I do feel for them. When I lost my grandmother 4 years ago it was an extreme shock, totally unexpected. Today her ring still sits near my bed and I often wear it myself when the pain of missing her is so severe. I will never get over losing her, I really don't see how anyone can fully get over an experience of such.

Student #15

People say that time heals everything. It's just the fact that as time passes you learn how to handle and deal with your grief or other problem. You can feel sorry for those Roman parents, but not as deeply as if one of your friends died. As time passes one can accept the feelings of loss or depression. Time is a great thing which is unstopable so maybe that is whey it can help many (most) people get through their trials and tribulations of life.

I.C. 211 November 16, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Is there such a force as natural political decay? is it inevitable that a political unit will at some time experience disorder and hardship among its people? Or, is it possible, through effective political leadership to maintain the health of a nation indefinitely?

Student #1

Every political organization is bound to have some hardships at some point and time because people change and the organization no longer suits them. They need something new. No matter how good a leader you are, it doesn't predict what the future holds. Every thing has a season. If you take a look back in history, there has been no political structure that has not eventually met downfall.

There is always some one smart enough to over throw the government.

Student #2

I believe that political structure can decay, but I wouldn't say it is inevitable in every situation.

If a system has the correct leadership, I think it can remain stable and strong. The changes in society that occurs over a period of years are what will be the push of political decay, but it the leadership can move and fall with those changes and yet be strong enough to come back, the system should survive.

Student #3

Well, I think that there is some political decay. I don't think it is to the extent that a nation would really fall, like the Roman Empire did. It seems to me that nations go through good times and bad times, you know they go up and down. Just look at the last hundred years of American history for an example of that. I think that political decay could be one of the factors that pulls the nation down in these cycles.

Student #4

National political decay is going to happen. There is never a perfect system to keep public support and strong leadership up to snuff.

Of course looking at countries like the U.S. who have giant systems of checks and balances, should be able to substain periods of weakness and spring back from them.

Student #6

Yes, it is inevitable for a nation to run into a rise and fall period. A person could run a nation for 10 years and always have a point in that land while maybe the next year, due to new people or maybe a bad crop of food, etc., that can change a nation's economy and ways of a nation's political standing. It has nothing to do with who is ruling the nation or how, but by environmental factors.

Student #7

Yes, political units will see some decaying of certain basic political aspects, but with a leader that can hold the nation and it's fundamental necessities and meanings. Leaders deal with keeping the political limits and their followers intact, also with followers they can either support or ruin a political withstanding.

Student #9

I think political decay is inevitable. Even with good leadership a nation must interact with other countries. No country is totally self-dependent. Other external factors include such things as famine, drought, disease, etc. Even with exceptional leadership a nation is bound to fall a little.

Student #10

I do believe that governments do have times of strain. The reason being that some people are not honest and try to take advantage of their positions in government. I feel through careful selection it can be stopped but people are human and we do make mistakes and we might put the wrong person in office.

Student #11

A nation with healthy political leadership can still fall much like the Roman Empire. It's one of those things that we just don't know. I believe it is also possible for a nation to maintain its power with a strong army and smart leadership. I think we really never know what can happen.

Student #12

To maintain the health of a nation is extremely hard. I feel it is pretty impossible to have a "perfect nation" throughout time. A person needs to fall down in order to be a stronger person, this relates to a nation also. No one can be perfect all the time, and when we are dealing with a nation there are many different views to take into consideration.

Student #13

Yes, I believe it is natural for the politics of a nation to fall. In a democracy the nation changes hands every 4-8 years. This has to lead to a decay. Different people will lead the nation different ways and with the changes of the other nations it is impossible for one nation to stay on top or for everything to go perfectly forever.

Student #14

As far as history shows us, there is always rising and falling going on. The U.S. has risen to its highest point and is now beginning to fall. If we can halt that fall maybe we can change history and prove that a political power can hold up forever.

Student #15

Very much so, it is happening in the United States now. It happens by slackening off and not continually looking ahead and becoming bogged down in one "section". The political power of a country may be able to keep a country on the go. It all depends on the leadership of the country and how it works.

Life can change so quickly that even if things are going well in a country one thing in the rest of the world can really change life in this country.

I.C. 211 November 21, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

As a political goal, which is more important: freedom or justice? Do they always go together in a political system, or can one be present to the exclusion of the other? Which do you think people are generally most desirous of having?

Student #2

That is such a difficult question to answer. "Which is more of an important political goal - freedom or justice?" I can't say either one is more important than the other - they are both so important.

Usually they both go together - without freedom, a system could not be considered "just", but without justice there isn't really and leeway for freedom. I care about both of these aspects a great deal in a political system, but I could never choose which is more important. That is a decision one just can't make.

Student #3

I'm not really sure if I can say one is more important than the other. I don't think that they always go together. Well, I think you can have justice without freedom, but I'm not really sure if freedom could really exist without justice. I mean on a national level I can't really imagine freedom without some degree of justice.

Student #4

Freedom comes with justice. In other words: In order to have freedom we must be just ourselves. Without justice, the world would be totally unruly. Therefore, our freedom would be limited to how well we could defend ourselves. I believe people are generally concerned with which ever happens to be affecting them at the time or the lack of them.

Student #7

I think the political goals of freedom and justice go along together. Without one the other will lessen its intensity upon the people of the world. Exclusion of one will interrupt or ruin the other and the basic goals of the nation. As an individual of a nation I think that both are needed and should persist. I can not speak for any other individuals as upon their choice, if I estimated one I would be wrong more than likely.

Student #8

In my opinion, freedom and justice are both needed in the world. "Freedom is obedience to the law" and the law means justice. If a person obeys the laws they will have all the freedom they want, but if they break the law then they go to jail, were they have no freedom. I think most people would prefer freedom over justice, because people like to do their own thing.

Student #9

I believe freedom and justice need to go together so that one person doesn't infringe upon the freedom of another. In our society I don't think either concept has more power. We all want equality and justice. We also want the freedom, or basic rights, guaranteed to be upheld by the Constitution. Freedom allows the growth of an individual. Justice checks freedom so that one person doesn't take away another's freedom.

Student #10

I think that freedom and justice go together. People can not be totally free because conflicts will arise. Justice is to solve the conflicts, if we did not have it then some men/women would take away each other's freedom. But because we have justice it is not allowed.

Student #11

I think freedom is more important than justice in politics because it is the base of our country. The two don't always go together but they probably should. I think people care more about their freedom than they do justice because there isn't justice all the time anyway and I believe that people would fear having their freedom taken away.

Student #12

I feel that freedom and justice go together, there is not one or the other. I feel the most important of the two is justice. The reason is because justice must be served, however that leads back to freedom. Freedom is something we all want and need, but justice always comes out in the end, because it is truth.

Student #13

I don't know how they go together. I believe people now want freedom more. I like the idea of justice. In order to have justice I believe there would be a certain amount of loss of freedom. Justice is important but today's people don't care for anyone but themselves. And this limits the amount of justice in the world. Freedom is important also, but if we have total freedom our amount of justice is limited.

Student #14

Freedom - the ability to do what you want, when you want.
Justice - the fairness of a ruling system.

I think that there must be some type of justice system working before you can have freedom. So, no I don't think there can be freedom without justice. Which one is more important? I would say that justice is more important.

Student #15

I think that both freedom and justice should go together. By having them together it protects the people from crime and corruption but yet doesn't take away from all that much of their freedom. Most people care more about freedom because they think what would it be like without it and we've seen things from the past about what it's like. If there was total freedom then I don't know what it would be like.

I.C. 211 November 28, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Does war often change the overall course of history, or is war usually a delusion with respect to the effects people think it is going to have? Under what circumstances is a nation justified in going to war?

Student #1

War does cause a change in history. The outcome of a war can have great effects. One, it can cause many people to die. Who knows amongst those dead may have been one of the greatest leaders of a country. Also by having so many people die a country's economic system can be destroyed and cause a strong country to become weak. Also if nuclear weapons were used in a modern day war, we could possibly destroy the earth or large sections of it, in which would cause a drastic change in the way humans live.

Student #2

I feel that war does change the course of life in history, but war itself is often a delusion. There are many other ways to solve problems and make way for changes, besides war. People create pictures in their minds of battle and heroism and dream of wonderful results. It's an illusion to the reality of war.

I really do not feel any country has the right or reason to have a war. As I said, there are other ways to change the world's problems; wars only create more.

Student #3

Well, I don't think that war is justifiable, but nations should by all means protect themselves. I think that wars definitely have an impact on history, and wars change history. Just look at how Germany and Japan have changed because of WWII.

Student #8

War does in fact change history, it is very important throughout history, because without war the U.S. wouldn't be a free country, we would still be under English rule.

War does affect the people of many countries as well. Friends of mine have gone to the Persian Gulf to help fight other country's battles and to help stop the destruction.

Student #9

War is a delusion because during a war there isn't any thought given to its duration or possible side effects. In all the wars we've been involved in, look at the millions that died and devastation to cities and countryside. A war stricken country isn't pleasant - everyone suffers.

Student #9 (continued)

I believe war may alter history only because of its effect on the nation. I hope that by learning about our recent wars we can prevent future wars.

I don't know if war can be justified. I suppose it would be in a situation of suppression of another country or forced invasion. I would hope that nations would try other measures before enlisting their people into a futile bloodbath.

Student #10

War does change lives of people and do sometime change the government. War does not always change things for the better. A nation, in my opinion, is never justified in going to war. There is always a more peaceful way. Lives are valuable to waste in war.

Student #12

War does change the course of history. We learn from our mistakes, which makes us an all-around better country as a whole. War is a horrible way of trying to solve a problem between two different countries, towns, or even cities, but it does happen and when it does it does manipulate our world with some form of change, whether we want it or not.

Student #14

Yes, war will change the course of history. After every modern war there have been new claims on countries that could have gone on on their if the war had not happened. As for starting a war no one should do such a thing. People should stay within their own country and leave the others to ask for assistance but not for war.

I.C. 211 November 30, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

The following couplet is contained in one of W.H. Auden's poems:

> Intellectual disgrace stares from every human face,
> And the seas of pity lie locked a frozen in each eye.

What is intellectual disgrace? Is it a component of hard-heartedness? Does intellectual disgrace cause pity to freeze up?

Student #1

Intellectual disgrace means to me that human beings are ashamed for what they don't know. Humans are always afraid to have people think that they are dumb so they all act like they know what's going on when no one really does.

The only people that know you don't know something is yourself. The only person that is being harmed by this silence is yourself, because you never know the answer.

It is sad when you see someone who doesn't know better. The lack of knowledge is harming them greatly and they do not know enough to know better.

Student #2

Intellectual disgrace must be a component of hard-heartedness, as almost every form of disgrace does. It does seem to cause pity to freeze in "one's eyes." It causes hard-heartedness and leaves a person uncaring and unsensitive to another.

Student #3

Intellectual disgrace doesn't really mean anything to me. I can't really make any connection between that and hard heartedness. Actually, I suppose someone of intellect might have greater insight to forgive and forget but as far as pity freezing up in one's eyes - I don't know. Maybe I'm just not understanding the passage and what it's trying to say.

Student #4

Intellectual disgrace, in my opinion, is the misuse or non-use of what one has at their disposal. On the one hand some use their intelligence to do evil and others leave it rotting for their whole life.

Some people do have no pity or caring for the deeds that occur against humanity. Many people have no notice of what is going around them - tragic or not. However, their is a small few that do have pity and care and keep things going. These are the people where disgrace originates. Without the good, the bad would not be noticed.

Student #9

My definition of intellectual disgrace is cheating or allowing someone else to do your work for you. I haven't any tolerance for cheating and dishonesty. I believe that those who rely on this type of academic dishonesty are only shortchanging themselves and their capabilities to succeed. The eye of pity is for those unable to risk mistake or accept a failure. In addition, this type of pity is for those who only do the minimum level of work and never challenge themselves to reach a higher level of excellence.

Student #10

Intellectual disgrace is when someone has let their mind go to waste. I don't think that hard heartedness goes with it because how much you know isn't a measure of how much you feel. Pity is an emotion, therefore I do not feel that intellectual disgrace freezes pity.

Student #12

Intellectual disgrace means for me, being wrong and feeling pretty stupid. It does relate to pity in some way, but only if you go as far as to pity yourself. I don't really know if I would say it makes pity freeze up, but it does have some sort of impact.

Student #13

Intellectual disgrace is the fact that each person does not use their capacity of learning. I don't think it's hard heartedness but maybe it does limit a person. The person can care but not really understand the total person.

So, no intellectual disgrace does not mean hard heartedness and no it does not cause pity to freeze. It might cause it to flow more easily because the person does not know another feeling or a way of understanding.

Student #14

I'm not really all that sure I can define this from just that couplet. I would say that yes, intellectual disgrace as stupidity could cause hard heartedness. When you don't have a full understanding of something you don't want to get thrown from your position because you really aren't sure of your place. It might freeze pity then because of the stubbornness.

Student #15

I think that intellectual disgrace would be either not knowing enough or knowing too much for one's good. Either way this could lead to hard heartedness because if one doesn't know enough they won't understand things and if they know too much it will cause them to maybe hide their feelings. And this could very likely cause some pity to freeze up and not be shown.

I.C. 211 December 5, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Are democracies more or less likely to engage in war than other nations? In waging war is a democracy more or less effective than other nations?

Student #1

A democracy is more likely to go to war because they are constantly fighting for their freedom or against a cause that is some how jeopardizing their freedom. They also go to war to free other countries so they can have a democratic government. Although what happens a lot of the time is that these countries we so boldly invade do not want a democratic government or are not ready for it. Even though we "save" these countries if they do not want the democracy they will not work to make it a success.

Student #2

I feel that a democratic system is less likely to go to war. In a democracy there is more communication and input from many persons, which open up several alternatives to fighting a war (in order to resolve a problem).

Once at war, though, I would have to say that unfortunately a democracy would have less chance of survival. In a war there is basically one goal: to survive. In a democratic nation there would be too much leeway and no final decisions to carry out would be made. No one would agree on decisions of what to do next. It would cause chaos and in war there is no room for that.

Student #3

I don't think that they are more likely to start a war, democracies will defend themselves, but I don't think they generally make the first move or incident that start the war. They generally don't give the first push, but when pushed they do (and should) push back. As far as getting hurt more, generally in term of men, I think wars hurt both sides. But in others ways, they (some) aren't hurt as much as others. For example, the U.S. didn't really get hurt at all as far as cities, towns, and society in general (except for Pearl Harbor) in any of the wars we've been engaged in. All the wars we fight have been in other countries so we weren't hurt as bad as those "hosting" the wars.

Student #4

Democracies aren't any more susceptible to being involved in war than anyone else. But, today if a democracy goes to war, chances are good that the U.S. will back them in it. Most democracies are allied with the U.S. and get help from us anyway. The main theory is: Don't mess with democracy or the big boys will be at your throat.

Student #5

Democratic governments I feel are less "at risk" for war because they are made up of many people, all which do not have the same views and ideas (so it's harder to get is passed). Once in a war situation we do all right, but having to serve to so many people to get things done I think decreases our wartime efficiency.

Student #8

I believe that democracies do in fact go to war less than other governments, such as Communism. Being a country run by a democracy does have its disadvantages. I think one of these disadvantages is the fact that when we (our country) go to war we don't do so well, because too many people are calling the shots.

Student #9

I think democracies are less likely to engage in war because the needs of the people and overall decision are weighed with caution. I think democracies are more apt to try and divert war by peace missions, etc. I think democracies are more effective during a war because the people rally support and propagation is used to influence the mass.

Student #10

I feel that a democracy is less like to wage war than an other kind of government. People do not like war. A democracy is governed by what the people want. If people don't like war then one can conclude they wouldn't want war. In other types of government the government does not have to answer to the people as a whole. Therefore, it is easier to wage war. I feel that a democracy in war is as effective as other governments. This is because in time of war certain powers are given to the rulers in a democracy that they do not have at times of peace.

Student #12

I do think that they are more likely to go to war. The reason I say this is because of the large amount of people trying to make decisions, especially trying to make only one decision. Once they do go to war, I don't think it really solves anything, but they probably feel that it does because they made a stand, therefore they feel better about themselves because they got thru the worst possible.

Student #13

I think democracies are less likely to go to war. In a monarchy their is just one person that has to say let's go to war. In a democracy I believe they try to stay out of war as much as possible.

There are a number of people that need to want war or at that find no alternative to war for a democracy to declare war.

Student #14

I think that democracies are less likely to go to war because the mothers do not want to lose their sons primarily. But also because a dictator or monarch can't just say they slighted me, or I want that land and go get it. Democracies must go to the people to be allowed such a decision.

Student #15

I think democracies are less likely to go to war because it's not just one person making all the decisions. In the end the President has final say in an emergency. Once we get involved in war I think we (democracy) would be stronger and pull together more because it was "our" decision to get involved. We don't just have one person saying ok people we are now at war against this or that country so we would fight with more of our hearts in it.

I.C. 211 December 7, 1988

IN-CLASS WRITING EXERCISE

Is specialized training necessary in order to get full value from literary and historical study, or can most of the good of such reading be realized using the skills and understanding one develops through general education? Give examples from your own experience.

Student #1

Before one can get the full value out of a historical reading such as the ones we did this semester, one has to know what was going on at the time that the reading was written. If you have no background on the people than you can not appreciate why they thought like they did. Their thoughts may seem inhuman. But if anyone ever was to write about us and how we thought the readers could not truly appreciate it if they did not know what was going through our minds to make us think the way we were.

Student #2

I feel that you receive value from a text through your own general knowledge. But, then again you need to ask yourself, "What is value?" Value is your own makings of it, and of course it varies with each individual. In any situation and with any text an individual needs to think about what the author is stating, and then using his own schema (or prior knowledge) he needs to make his own perspectives on it. Anything a person develops, a perception, or a thought, on or about could be considered an aspect of value - in my opinion.

Student #3

I guess it would depend on the texts and what is considered "full value" or better value. I think that extensive literary training would certainly help on certain texts. Take Henry I for example, if I had read this book without taking this class I would have missed out on a lot of important things because I basically have no idea what life was like back then. That statement would hold true for any of the texts we read. So if we can consider this class as "literary training," then I would say yes, it does help. But also there are certain books and texts that don't need this training along with it, I can't think of a particular one right now, but I know there must be at least one.

Student #5

I don't feel that you need specialized training to get anything out of literature, because they were written for all people and can be useful in face value alone. To get anything out of Shakespeare one does not need to have a degree in English but can understand it at a comfortable level. It is those people who are not satisfied with face value who go to school simply to find out if a reference to a field of flowers is anything more than it really is.

Student #7

I feel if you have fully developed the skills you have been taught throughout your general education you will be able to understand the basic text with virtually some underlying meaning found with different students/readers. If the reader applies themselves, success and understanding of the texts will come naturally, but with the guidance of an experienced instructor/mentor the reader will become more flexible and stressed with the texts/any form of reading with historical background. Self-education takes a lot of time and motivation to be successful, laziness is an aspect we all deal with.

Student #8

I personally believe that a person doesn't need special training to receive the literary and historical parts of books. Most people can read a book and basically know what's going on historically due to the fact of their education. I think the literary parts are harder to receive because not everyone likes the same style of literature. As an example to help prove my point, I really enjoyed the Odysse. My historical background helped be obtain the history parts, but I had trouble receiving the literary.

Student #9

I don't believe that one needs to have specialized training in order to get the value of literature and history. If a general education is broad enough to encompass different styles and periods. In order to appreciate the value of literature one needs a sense of history and the time frame of the book. In the scene sense, history is enriched by literature because poets and authors bring an otherwise seemingly "dead" era to life. By intertwining the two areas one can gain a deeper and more appreciative value of both.

Student #10

I do not believe that you need specialized training to get something out of reading. When true learning takes place what is being learned must effect the learner in a personal way. The only way you get anything from a reading if it means or touches you in some way. If the reading does not mean anything to you in a personal sense then you will get nothing out of it. A course that helps to develop through logic may be helpful.

Student #11

I believe specialized training in reading certain texts such as Shakespeare can be very helpful. The ordinary student can be very bogged up in some of his plays or even sonnets but the person who was trained specially could see over obstacles in the text because of the training. Being trained at anything would or should help more as compared to not being trained or self-trained. But, most importantly, just because the training was given doesn't mean that it is understood.

Student #14

I feel that I get enough out of literary classics to please myself through the mostly general education I have received so far. I must admit that I think this course should follow IC 102 and not come before it, as I did, if it is to be taught in the same way. We really need more chance to analyze and criticize literature before doing such a major term paper that requires just that. As for examples of how I think my general education has been enough the only one I can really think of would be that my first reading of the Bible was as pleasure during my junior year and I certainly understood enough of it then.

Term Papers

For term papers, I asked students to write critical essays of about three thousand words dealing with some portion of their reading. These were not to be a research papers, and no sources other than the texts for the course were required.

My goal for the assignment was to encourage students to read closely, and to learn to make meaning out of what they read.

I met with each student four times in small group sessions which we called writing tutorials. At these meetings we discussed possible themes, and after the students had selected topics we talked about how the topics might be developed. We also tried to anticipate the pitfalls each topic might contain.

Among some of the students there was doubt about the meaning of the term, "critical essay," so we spent considerable time talking about that. I tried to convey what it means to make something of a text, and to explain which kinds of "makings" are acceptable and which go beyond the line. Over and again, I urged the students to go back to the text, to examine it carefully, and to draw out of it only those interpretations which did it no violence. I wanted the students to respect both the text and their own thoughts, and to find ways to bring the two honorably together.

The results, of course, were mixed. There were some good papers and some not so good. Overall, they were better than I anticipated. So I was pleased.

I include three examples here, which I believe represent the range fairly well. When I handed the papers back, I said that none were disgraceful. I suppose that's true, though I wish some had been stronger. To one of the examples here, I assigned an "A", to one, a "B", and to the third, a "C". I won't say which is which; I hope it will be obvious. Yet, I know that assigning grades to student writing is among most inexact of academic practices.

I am careful to remind students that the grades they receive from a professor should never be taken as a measure of their personal worth. In keeping with that preachment, let me say that the student who wrote the "C" paper here is as decent and likable as anyone in the course.

It is difficult to know how these papers would compare with those done at other institutions. Other colleges may have standards such that writings of this quality would have been evaluated differently. But, regardless of their comparative standing, I think they show young people honestly struggling to interact with important works. And that is what they were supposed to accomplish.

Marcus Aurelius

Meditations

Marcus Aurelius was the Roman emperor from 161 until he died in 180. The book Meditations was his contribution to the world. Meditations is about Marcus Aurelius's internal struggle to become a stoic. A stoic defined by Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary is a member of a school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium about 300 B.C. holding that wise men should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief and submissive to natural law. Marcus Aurelius never became a true stoic because it is not possible for a human being.

To understand why a human can never become a true stoic one must examine the philosophy of stoicism. Stoics define the word philosophy as striving after wisdom, and wisdom is the knowledge of things that are divine and human. Therefore, one might conclude that a person who had striven after wisdom and obtained the knowledge of all things that are divine and human is a wise man.

To be a stoic you must be a wise man that is free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law. The problem with a wise man obtaining these three things is that it requires an inhuman composure. Being human means experiencing passion, joy, grief, and making mistakes. Society today has learned to accept these things. Someone that is unlike this is inhuman. That person would be considered unfeeling and cold.

Stoics believe that a man needs to be dependent on none but himself and providence. To do this a man must be free from passion. When free from it a man has self-control and with that comes happiness because he acts out of himself instead of out of his passion. Although stoics believe this is true, it is not. A person is not an empty shell. People are made up of hopes, dreams, fears, loves, and passions. Without these things a person is no longer human; they become an empty shell.

Life is not being fearless or passionless. For example, the lion in the Wizard of Oz wanted to be brave because he was a coward. He learned through his travels with Dorothy, the Tin Woodsman, and the Scarecrow that is is okay to be afraid of some things, as long as you recognize them, and deal with it. A stoic would say that the lion should have no fears at all. Without fear the lion would be himself because he does not have to deal with fear.

Society today does not accept uncontrollable passions, but we do understand them. For example, there are crimes of passion in this society. Society does not feel that it is okay fro passions to get out of control but it does realize it happens. Stoics believe that there should be no passion in a person. On the other hand, society today accepts it and feels it is controllable, whereas a stoic feels that it is not. Stoics believe only without passion can a person have self control.

In John Turner's daily report to his I.C. 211 class he said that stoics believe "only when a person is free of the fear of pain or the obsessions of pleasure can he be said to own himself." The philosophy of society today would be that a person can only be said to own himself when he/she has learned to recognize and deal with fear of pain or the obsessions of pleasure. Society recognizes that the people are human and do have to act on human feelings. Stoics, on the other hand, require a person to be inhuman.

In Meditations, Marcus Aurelius says, "Never allow yourself to be swept off your feet: when the impulse stirs, see first that it will meet the claims of justice; when an impression forms, assure yourself first of its certainty." This is a stoic statement. It shows you that to act directly on an impulse is bad unless it is carefully thought through and is for the best. If an impulse is thought through, it is no longer an impulse. For example, if you were shopping and saw someting you liked, and then bought it, that would be impulsive. On the other hand, if you saw something you liked and took the stoic approach, you would go home to think about it before you purchased it. You would take into consideration if you needed it or not. If everyone had this approach, there would be no stores. Society would sell everything through catalogs so that people would have as much time as they needed to decide. Stores would be impractical because if you were shopping in Burlington you would have to make two trips. The first trip would be to look over the merchandise, and the second would be to buy it, after careful thought.

Stoics believe that a man should be unmoved by joy or grief. In Meditations, Marcus states: "To live each day as though it were one's last, never flustered, never apathetic, never attitudinizing -- here is the perfection of character." Stoics believe that when a person is free from feelings, he/she has perfected his character. Society today would feel that the person had escaped humanity. To be human is to have compassion, sympathy, or consideration for others. If the people in this world were all stoic, it would be like living in a world of robots. Without apathy there would be no society. Without attitudinizing, there would be no individual personalities, and without either of the two there would be no frustration. What would be the purpose of living if people were not experiencing the joy and grief of it.

Joy and grief are the foundation of all feelings. For example, a person cannot experience love or friendship without joy or grief. Stoics believe emotions cause disorder and because one goal of the stoics is to depend only on oneself, there should not be disorder. Emotions cause disorder to stoics, and this is uncontrollable. A stoic needs control to depend only on him/herself.

In today's society, emotions do sometimes cause disorder. A person in this society is expected to learn how to sort out his/her emotions. A stoic point of view would be to rid oneself of emotions. Stoics believe that without these emotions, you will be able to control yourself; with control comes happiness. On the other hand, today's society would feel that happiness is achieved when a person has identified his/her feelings.

Marcus Aurelius stated in Meditations: "When you have done a good action, and another has benefit of it, why crave for yet more in addition -- applause for your kindness, or some favor in return -- as the foolish do." When people give something or help someone, they feel good about themselves. The person may help again because it makes him/her feel good. A stoic like Marcus Aurelius would feel that the person was looking for applause. Today's society would feel that it was all right because both sides benefit. A stoic would not agree because only the receiving side should benefit.

To be submissive to Natural Law is a moral rule of stoicism. Natural law is what is uncontrollable to humans. For example, "bodily health, wealth, friends, death, and such like are not ours to command; therefore they can be neither helps nor hindrances to the Natural Life." This is based on the belief that nture is good. Stoics believe nature will benefit them or help them to benefit. Stoics are passive toward nature and let it take its course. Today's society is by no means passive toward nature. For instance, nuclear bombs are not passive. A stoic would feel that this society was not being submissive to Natural Law because we are trying to control it. Nuclear bombs can cause death, and death is nature's realm. The bombs can harm us in our natural life. To be submissive to a stoic is not to have things that help or hinder our natural life.

Stoicism expects a state of being that no human can sustain. It requires humans to forget everything society has taught them. Society's belief today is to experience life and the emotions that go with it to their fullest. To live your life without feeling joy or grief would not be living. Stocism requires a person to shut off his or her feelings. An unfeeling person in this society would be called inhuman. If everyone in the society were a stoic, there would be no society, because society's foundatio is that people care about each other.

Although a person can never become a true stoic, at times humans may be required to take on a stoic composure. For instance, if a person was with a group of people, and something embarrassing happened, he/she might assume a stoic composure. That person might be embarrassed, but because he/she takes a stoic composure, none in the group will know of it. Also, the person may avoid further embarrassment.

The basics of being happy in this society contradict stoicism. Society is based on the fact that people are human. Being human is having compassion, sympathy, or consideration for others. Stocism teaches a person not to have feelings and to be passive, not to try to change things for the better. In this society, a stoic would be unacceptable. It is not possible for persons to be stoic because they are human. Although it is conceivable that at times a person may take on stoic composure to avoid embarrassment.

The Mythical Story of Adam and Eve: Mankind's Choice to Sin, Quest for Knowledge and Alienation from God

Throughout the history of mankind, the Bible has probably been read more than any other book or piece of literature ever written. A version of the Living Bible entitled "The Way" says that there are close to two billion copies of the Bible in as many as 1,280 different languages in circulation today. Of course the main reason for the Bible's popularity is because of it's use in various religions. The Bible serves as the building block for all of the different forms of Christian and Jewish religions. Aside from the Bible's religious importance, it has also served as a source for historical information. It tells us about the people that lived in the area of the world which we now call the Middle East, from the eighteenth century B.C. to the first century A.D.. When compared to many other historical books, this puts the Bible in a class of its own.

Perhaps what makes the Bible truly unique is how it combines historical facts with symbolic myths. I don't think that there is any doubt that certain stories in the Bible are myths, and that these stories are much too valuable to have their meanings reduced to a literal level. Robert A. Bennett and O.C. Edwards write that "the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is such a myth."(79) Whether or not Adam and Eve ever existed, or if the human race descended from a single pair is not important. The purpose of the story isn't for us to assume that Adam and Eve created the human race. Adam and Eve should be thought of as symbolic characters for the human race. W. K. Lowther Clarke is a biblical scholar who has studied the Bible for more than forty years. Dr. Clarke writes that Adam is "a collective noun meaning "mankind"."(954) The fall of Adam and Eve is what I would like to examine more closely. This story is the first of many stories in Genesis which show us how God would make everything good and how man would spoil it by sinning. What makes the story of Adam and Eve so important is that it illustrates how sin entered into the world. The overall control of God and how God directs man's history is an underlying theme that is stressed in Genesis and first presented through the story of Adam and Eve.

The method in which God controls man and the way He directs history are intertwined, but almost at the same time contradictory, in the story of Adam and Eve. To really understand God's control and direction of history we have to examine the actions of man (or Adam and Eve in this case) that cause the necessity for God's intervention. It all comes down to choices; it is clear that God wanted man to make his own choices. God wanted man to have the opportunity to choose to follow His way. It is the fact that man is allowed these choices that seems to make the idea of God's control and direction of history confusing. Is God controlling man by letting him choose to sin? By giving man that choice, wouldn't it seem that man is determining his own fate? If this is true, then isn't it man who directs his own history? I think that because man has a choice, that together man and God direct man's history.

When you look at the decision Adam and Eve had to make you can see how in one way they directed their own history. The choice they had was made quite clear by God. They could eat from any tree that they wanted to except from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told them that if they ate from that tree they would certainly die. So the choice between life and death was theirs to make. When you think about it though, the choice they had isn't as simple as it appears. It was not just a choice of simply either choosing to live or die, it was a choice of believing in God's word. God told them they would die if they ate from the tree. Because they did eat from the tree, we can only assume that they didn't believe they would die. Certainly nobody would choose the option which would result in death. What made the choice even more complicated was the fact that God allowed the serpent to tempt Eve when presented with this decision.

Temptation is an interesting part of the mythical story of Adam and Eve. The temptation is clearly caused by Satan. According to Dr. Clark, the biblical meaning of temptation is "put to the test." It is through Satan that God tested Adam and Eve's faith.(978) By tempting man, God can really test our decisions and choices. Temptation makes the choices more difficult. Thus, God must have been allowing Satan to tempt Eve by talking to her through the serpent. This doesn't really seem fair though because as Eve told God, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." Actually all the serpent did was lie to Eve. The serpent said that they wouldn't die if they ate from the tree, which was the opposite of what God had told them. This is the point where God was testing to see if Adam and Eve truly believed in His word. They were presented with the choice of believing God or the serpent (Satan). By allowing this temptation to take place God could see if Adam and Eve truly believed Him or if they were just following His orders of not eating from the tree. Well, everyone knows the choice they made.

In the story of Adam and Eve we can see how God is in control while still allowing them the opportunity to choose. There is no doubt about God's control, no matter what choice is made. If Adam and Eve had chosen not to eat from the tree, God would have been in control because then they would have been following His wishes. When they chose to eat from the tree, the actions taken by God show that He was still in control of Adam and Eve. Because they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they became like God knowing good and evil. God told us this in the Bible when He said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil." To maintain control of them, God banished Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden and placed a cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the tree of life. The act of guarding the tree of life is an excellent example of God's control in this story, but it also shows one way that God directed the history of man.

Until Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, God was willing to let them eat from the tree of life and live forever. He never told them not to eat from the tree of life, and it's only after they ate from the tree of knowledge that he guarded it from them and all those who would follow. By guarding the tree of life God condemned man to being a mortal being and told Adam:

> You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, to dust you shall return.

This shows how man's history was changed (or directed) by God, and as Dr. Clarke writes, "(death) came into the world through Adam's sin."(960) Another change that occurs here because Adam and Eve were banished from Eden is that they had to learn to fend for themselves. God was no longer the provider for them and He told them, "With labour you shall win your food from it (the ground) all the days of your life." Another way God directed man's history was by increasing the pain in childbearing for women(Eve). From this we must assume that before the sin took place, God had not intended childbearing to be as painful as it is.

Guarding the tree of life, increasing pain in childbearing, and banishing Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, are literal examples of God's control and influence over man and man's history that are presented in the third chapter of Genesis. To pick up the complete message of this symbolic myth we need to look beyond the literal meanings and question parts of the story. Possibly one of these hidden meanings is that man is in control of his own destiny. Now this seems to be a rather confusing thought because when you look at the literal meanings presented in the Bible the message is clearly that God is in control of man. Is it possible for man to control his own destiny while God is controlling man? Like I said before it all comes down to the choices man makes. The choices a person makes influence that person's own destiny. When we think of God being in control, we have to look at it as a type of ultimate control. While Adam and Eve were in control of their own personal choices and actions, God maintained control no matter what choices were made.

Think of this "ultimate" control in this sense. A student is required to write a term paper for one of his/her classes which makes up a good portion of the final grade in the class. The amount of work the student decides to put into the paper will have great repercussion on the student's final grade in the class. The student has the opportunity to choose how much work will be done if any, and is in total control of the paper. If the student is in total control of the paper, then wouldn't it seem that the student is in total control of the part of the final grade which the paper represents? Well this is not actually true because it isn't the student that decides what grade the paper shall receive in the end. The professor grades the paper, so the professor is in ultimate control of the student's grade. No matter how hard the student works, there is no guarantee that the student will receive the grade he/she desires. But on the other hand, the student does control the actual paper which in turn means that even though the ultimate outcome (grade) isn't in the student's control, the student can influence the outcome through the control he/she has over the paper.

This is what the story of Adam and Eve shows us. It shows that even though mankind isn't in total control of its fate or destiny, mankind can still greatly influence them. Mankind isn't in total control because it isn't able to control the natural forces in the world or prevent accidents and disasters from taking place. The best we can do is to take safety precautions from such events. When hurricanes strike, we evacuate to safer land. When driving cars in the middle of a snowstorm, we slow down and proceed with extra caution. Through choices mankind con control its actions and somewhat control its place in the environment around it, but it still can't control the entire environment in which it lives. Because mankind has the ability to influence its destiny through choices, it shows that there is no predestination or fate for mankind. If predestination did exist, then there would be no need for us to take precautions in our choices or actions. The student wouldn't have to worry about how much work was done on the paper because the grade would have already been determined. If predestination did exist, there wouldn't be fewer fatal accidents when people wear seat belts or drive sober as opposed to drunk. To say that there was such a thing as predestination would be the same as saying that God foresaw Adam's sin. For predestination to truly exist, God would have to have foreseen every decision that man has ever made.

This idea raises many questions concerning God as the "all-knowing" creator, and God ability to foresee that Adam and Eve would give into temptation and their earthly imperfections.

If God did know this, why did He even put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden and give them access to it? I think it would be safe to say that the presence of the tree in the garden was because of God's desire to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to either choose to believe in Him and His word or not to. If God didn't put the tree in the Garden of Eden, then Adam and Eve never would have had a choice to make. So in a strange kind of way, the tree represents the choices or options that all of mankind has the ability to make. The question about God's ability to foresee Adam's sin as the "all-knowing" creator isn't as easy to resolve.

To say that God did know or foresee all of man's sins would be the same as saying that by creating Adam and knowing that he would sin, God deliberately allowed evil to enter into man's history. This would mean in a sense that God is responsible for all that is wrong in the world. It seems rather contradictory to think that God did foresee what would definitely happen and that He didn't do anything to alter it. That just doesn't really make sense. It would be like saying God created everything just so He could watch it be destroyed. But at the same time it does seem that God, being the "all-knowing" supreme figure over all other beings, would have the ability to know or foresee future events. So I don't really see any way to easily solve this issue other than to say that God must have had the ability to foresee Adam's sin, but that he chose to make selective or discretionary use of that ability. If He didn't, then the freedom of choice which he wanted Adam (mankind) to be endowed with couldn't possibly exist. God didn't wish to foresee sins, but He certainly knew when they were committed. God immediately knew of Adam's sin, and we know that He didn't accept or condone the sin by the actions He took. God's view of sin is made clear in this verse from Psalms 5:4, "For thou art not a God who welcomes wickedness; evil can be no guest of thine."

Another symbolic point that the story of Adam and Eve expresses is how mankind became alienated from God. Their expulsion from Eden represents this. Robert A. Bennett writes: "Exile, for example, is a symbol for alienation. The story of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden is this symbol narratively extended into a myth."(77) The fact that Adam and Eve ate the fruit from a tree which was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil shows us why this alienation took place. The "fruit" of the tree wasn't a fruit like the apple for example, it was "knowledge of good and evil." This should be thought of as more than just moral knowledge, like knowing right from wrong. It should be thought of as a knowledge of all things, this is why the "all-knowing" God says, "...man has become like one of us."

Because Adam chooses to eat from the tree and gain knowledge shows that he wasn't happy with his immortal place in Eden. So Adam forfeited immortality in exchange for knowledge. This is what god told Adam would happen if he chose to eat from the tree and obtain that knowledge, "...for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." This thirst for knowledge that God didn't want mankind to have is what lead to the alienation. This was because God knew that once the man He created obtained knowledge, he wouldn't know how to properly use it. Historical facts like man creating the atomic bomb and using it on Hiroshima support this thought. Robert Bennett has some insight on this thirst for knowledge and alienation for God:

> Our first parents wanted to pass beyond their creaturely limitations and share in the omniscience of God. The infinite difference between the creature and the creator was ignored and thus the relation between them was broken.(184)

This was the story of Adam and Eve, this is the story of mankind. Through mankind's desires and inability to resist temptation, it follows the same path tht Adam and Eve took. Mankind continually fails the tests given by God. This is why in the Lord's Prayer we have the verse, "deliver us from evil, lead us not into temptation." In simple terms this can be translated, as Dr. Clarke writes, "do not let evil give us tests that are too hard for us."(978) The fall of Adam and Eve was caused by such a test, it is one of the Bible's best examples of temptation. From this story we can see the importance that our choices and decisions have on our lives. We see that our future really is in our own hands, while at the same time we re held responsible for our actions. We see how the actions we choose to take have repercussions on the ultimate future of mankind. Adam and Eve is the story of life. It shows us that if we're totally consumed by our desires for knowledge and by quests to overcome our earthly limitations that we ultimately will destroy ourselves from these choices. It shows us how we, mankind, made our first mortal mistake by choosing to sin and how we continue to alienate ourselves from God and what is right by continuing to sin.

The Faces of Penelope

Penelope is a lady of many faces as she is represented in the Odyssey. Although she is not spoken of often in the book, she plays a vital role in the story. Without Penelope the Odyssey would not end in such zeal.

The suitors who move in during Odysseus' absence and take over his kingdom are there for the sole purpose of gaining her hand in marriage so they may become the owners of Odysseus' estate. Odysseus fights for twenty years, like a warrior, against greatest odds to return to his homeland of Ithika and his wife. He returns to Ithika and frees Penelope from the clutches of the evil suitors so they may live to a ripe golden age together.

Penelope is a mysterious character as she is represented in the Odyssey. She stays locked in her room day after day mourning the loss of her husband. She can be heard weeping into the long dark hours of the night until she finally falls asleep. Like a fairy, she appears occasionally to the suitors for brief moments only, to quickly disappear behind her bedroom door again. Can it be possible that a woman's love for her man be so great that she would weep twenty years straight with only seldom interruptions.

In todays overnight relationships and speedy recoveries from ended affairs it is hard to imagine. I would begin to wonder if a person capable of this was psychologically stable. With a castle full of eligible bachelors, I myself would be tempted to forget all too quickly but Penelope's loyalty is not side-tracked as easily as mine. She is faithful to her lover 'till the very end. Without Odysseus her life is a wasted thing. She orders herself not to give in to the suitors because one day her husband may be back.

Penelope's beauty is said to have been breathtaking. Upon walking into a room she could stop all activity. The suitors would stare in amazement and uncontrollable passion. "The skin of her pale face grew moist the way pure snow softens and glistens on the mountains, thawed by south winds as the snow melt..." p. 334. when she did make public appearances to the suitors "...instant weakness took those men in the knee joints, their hearts grew faint with lust, not one but swore to God to lie beside her." p. 359. As much as her physical appearance was beautiful, there must have been something more to her that made so many men wait for years in hopes that she would be his antecedent ? bride. It' must have gotten boring after the first couple of years just hanging around a smoke filled room, doing nothing but eating. Was it simply that she was the forbidden fruit? Maybe it was ~~the~~ her loyalty that drove men crazy with love. Maybe it was because she was a woman of power and prestige. Possibly the Gods laid a spell on the suitors that made them want nothing else in the world and Homer just forgot to mention it. Whatever it was it made the suitors forget about their homeland or not care enough about it to return there for twenty years. If I ever figured it out I would put it on the market and make multi-millions with it.

Penelope is as popular a character today as she was when she was first thought up. I think because the readers can relate with her feelings, they think of how wonderful it would be to have someone as faithful to them as Penelope is to her husband. In the 20th century of Promise Causity, loyalty is on the endangered species list. Women who read this story are also impressed with Penelope because she makes them wonder, "How does she do it?" The fantasies of waiting faithfully for years while their lover is are a prisoners prisoner of war bounce around in their heads. To have a white knight like Odysseus gallop to the rescue is very desirable. Also the fantasies of what it would be like to make love to someone after twenty years of absence, the lust and passion must be reaching maximum capacity.

Although Penelope is faithful to the bitter end, the same thing cannot be said of Odysseus. He stays with Kalypso for eight years. Even though Kalypso "forces" Odysseus to lay lie with her everynight, I'm sure this is one chore he does not mind.

The way Homer explains this in the Odyssey I get the impression that this was an acceptable thing of the time, and still is today. Today men can have multi-affairs and the people who know them think nothing of it and it is still very acceptable. It is not considered bad or wrong. It's just another notch on his boyscout belt. Yet a woman who has multi-affairs is considered a slut and of poor moral value. Odysseus slew his maids because they slept with the suitors and this is an unforgivable act. He does not kill the suitors for this reason at all.

When Penelope asks her son Telemakhas what the beggar told her about her husband he does not hesitate to tell her that Odysseus was on an island with Kalypso. He said that the beggar stated "on the island your father lies and grieves. The ancient saw him held by the nymph Kalypso,..." p. 303. Penelope being the intelligent woman that she is, must have known immediately that Odysseus slept with her.

It was very cruel of Telemakhas to tell his mother this. I'm sure Penelope would have been just as satisfied to hear of something else besides the fact that her husband had been stranded on an island with a beautiful Goddess. I did not realize male machoism started so early in the history of the human race. Odysseus himself must restate the fact of Kalypso. After Penelope and Odysseus reunite and make love for the first time he tells her how "He alone survived, cast away on Kalypso isle, Ogygia. He told then, how that nymph detained him there in her smooth caves, craving him for her husband, and how in her devoted lust she swore he should not die nor grow old, all his days, but he held out against her." p. 405. Just what every woman wants to hear after she has given herself to a man. I would personally take it as a slap in the face. Penelope passive as she is, does not get jealous or upset. She listens patiently with greatest·interest.

Whether Penelope is an intelligent individual or not is hard to tell. In some of her action there is no doubt there is planning behind them, other times I have to wonder if she is not just lucky? She states frequently to her son Telemakhas that she wishes the suitors would leave. They are eating her out of house and home and destroying Odysseus' wealth. Yet she inspires them to stay on as if she wants them there. She fools the suitors when she tells them she has started a new project of spinning a new cloak for her next husband. When she is done with this cloak she will announce to them which one she has chosen. All day she works with extreme precision because the cloak can be nothing but the best. At night she sneaks out of her room and unravels all the work she has done that day. I still have not figured out how come the suitors did not notice that the cloak was not getting any longer. Penelope's little game went on for a few years before she got caught. When she does get caught it is not because the suitors had figured it out either. One of Penelope's maid servants reports her actions to the suitors.

Could it be that the suitors were so drunk all of the time that they never figured out what Penelope was doing? What further puzzles me is what is the principle behind this whole lie? Why does Penelope even start a cloak to begin with? The cloak and waiting for its completion is an excuse for the suitors to remain at castle. Penelope does not want those men there so why is she giving them excuses to stay? Could it be that she is actually considering marrying one of the suitors? Maybe she is testing them out to see how dumb they are.

The kingdom belongs to Penelope and Odysseus. Penelope is the mistress of this estate and with the help of her son, she is the ruler while Odysseus is away. She can order these men to leave at any time so why doesn't she? Odysseus must have left an army behind to protect his kingdom while he was away at Troy. I cannot believe Odysseus has taken all of his army and left his land unprotected from anyone's attempt to override it. Penelope, with the help of this army, could rid herself of these men. There was no army

sp.

She further intices them to stay when she sends them individual notes stating that he is her favorite and that she'll probably choose him. The suitors have never threatened her with death or harm if she does not decide which one she wants. Why doesn't she just come right out and say that none of them appeal to her, she's not going to marry any of them and she wishes they would get out of her life?

One reason that she may not have done this is because they story would not have such an extraordinary ending. If she had told the suitors to leave and they had, then Odysseus would have come home to an empty castle. He would not have been the great warrior that he turns out to be in the end. Another reason she may not do this is because she likes having all these men around drooling after her. Maybe she wants Odysseus to come home and find all these men there so he will realize how sought after by other men she is. Maybe Penelope fears if she does send the suitors home the Gods will be annoyed at her for not being a good hostess and punish her. I wonder though if after twenty years a person is still considered a guest. I do not know how long of a time it takes for a person to lose his/her title of being a "guest." It is never clarified in the readings. Maybe Penelope is keeping the suitors around so her son, Telemakhas, can have a father figure. The suitors are not the best father figures but they are better than nothing. Penelope may be one of those people who cannot stand a quiet house and she keeps the suitors around for company. The suitors entertain her and give her something to look after. She may keep the suitors around in case that one day she want to marry one.

If Penelope does not know why she is keeping the suitors around for so long she does know enough to get some beautiful gifts out of them. "'How galling, too, to see new fangled manners in my suitors! Others who go to court a gentle woman, daughter of a rich house, if they are rivals, bring their own breeves and sheep along; her friends ought to be feasted, gifts are due to her; would any dare to live at her expense?'... her sweet tones charming gifts out of the suitors with talk of marriage though she intends none." p. 321. The book frequently states that the suitors are eating Odysseus' estate away. If Penelope were to say this frequently enough she could actually gain from having the suitors stay with her. She could also come right out and tell them that if they wanted to stay in the castle they would have to supply their own food. I am sure they would listen to her. All she has to say is give me a gift and charm me and the suitors run and fetch her a gift. I'm sure if she asked them to supply their own food they would.

Penelope could also request that the suitors be nice to her son. The suitors should have figured out that one of the ways to heart was through her son. If they would have treated him like their own son they would have won her love. Instead the suitors poke fun at Telemakhas. Penelope allows the suitors to do this and she does not defend him. Maybe she does this because she wants Telemakhas to become a man and defend himself.

the suitors are not very smart men. After twenty years they still think that Penelope just cannot decide which one of them she wants. When she unweaves her cloak they are not able to pick this fact up. What amazes me is that they are all powerful men who own their own countries. How die did such stupid men get into such high ranking positions? Can't they figure out that you cannot stay and abuse a person's home and generosity for twenty years and not end up by paying for it eventually? They allow Penelope to control them like puppets. Possibly their love for Penelope and their greed for Odysseus' estate is making them blind to reality. It is hard to believe that men in that time of human history are letting a woman outwit them.

A contest is arranged by Penelope. Whoever is capable of shooting with her possessive husbands' bow get her hand in marriage "'Here is my lord Odysseus' hunting bow. Bend the string if you can. Who sends an arrow through iron axe-helves sockets, twelve in line? I join my life with his and leave this place, my home, my rich and beautiful bridal house, forever to be remembered, though I dream it only." So each suitor thinks that he is powerful enough to bend the bow. Much to their surprise, they cannot. They sit there like fools trying over and over again to shoot from the bow. Grunting and groaning trying all kinds of maneuvers while Penelope enjoys herself watching them look foolish. Then when Odysseus, disguised as a beggar, bends the bow they are not even concerned. I still have not figured out why Penelope had this contest; I do not know what she was trying to prove by it?

Penelope does not appear to be a good household budgeter. Her estate is quickly being eaten up by the suitors. She does not ask for enough gifts from them to replenish her exhausted supplies. She then goes and loads gifts onto beggars. If a beggar comes to Penelope and pretends he has news of Odysseus, she rolls out the red carpet for him. She cleans him up, feeds him, houses him overnight if he needs it, puts him on her ships and sends him whereever he wants to go and before he leaves she gives him nice gifts. It does not take long for the word to get out that she is very generous to anyone who has news of Odysseus; so, of course, people needing food or shelter or wanting gifts, just make something up. she never asks for hard evidence to prove what they are telling her. For an estate that is already being taxed by suitors, she is increasing the problem. She may be so desperate in hearing about her husband that she will give anything for some news and lies are better than nothing. Maybe she is just being a generous hostess like the Gods want her to be. Possibly she figures the suitors are going to clean her out anyway that she might as well give some of it to people who really need it.

Penelope longs for her husband Odysseus. She cries everyday and cries herself to sleep at night. She will do anything and give anything for news of her husband. Yet when Odysseus comes to Penelope in beggar form she does not recognize him. She does not pick-up on any clues about his looks even if they are disguised by Athena. She does not notice his voice or any of his manners. Odysseus is supposed to be so different from all other men in his massive build and grace. Yet she does not notice any of this. I find this hard to understand because Penelope is Odysseus' wife. She knows him better than anyone else does, even his dog. She has seen him clothed, unclothed, happy, sad, angry, sleeping and active yet she does not know him when he is two feet away from her but his dog does. Could it be that Athena's disguise is so good or that she has fogged Penelope's eyes over somehow. Maybe Penelope is preoccupied with what the beggar is telling her that she does not pay attention to his looks. When he pulls the bow why doesn't she get suspicious at all? She has been waiting for her husband for so long one would think she would look for him in every crowd and pay attention to every strange face.

After twenty years of torture on both Penelope and Odysseus' part they are finally reunited. When Odysseus discloses who he is to Penelope she is hesitant to believe that he is truly her husband. She tests Odysseus by saying to the maid to put her bed near the fire. Odysseus realizes this trap and tells Penelope that there is no possible way to move the bed because it is carved out of a tree. Penelope runs and embraces her husband and they retire to their room together for a night filled with long awaited passion. The bed in Penelope's bedroom is a sexual object. Only she is allowed to see it and lay lie* on it. The door is always closed and the suitors long to get a glimpse of it. It is described like something out of a fairy tale. A treasure of greatest value with very careful design put into it. "...the silvery leaves and branches hewed and shaped that stump from the roots up into a bed post, drilled it, let it serve as a model of rest. I planned them all, inlaid them all with silver, gold and ivory and stretched a bed between..." p. 401. Only the best love could be made on a bed like this.

It is all the different character personalities that give Penelope her mystery. It is no wonder Odysseus fought so hard to get back to his lady.

* you lie on the bed yourself; you lay your dress on the bed.

Final Examinations

Structuring useful exercises for the final examination is one of the most perplexing parts of teaching, especially in the humanities. I'm not sure I succeeded in this instance.

My goal for the examination was the same as my goal for other aspects of the course -- to try to help students learn. Finding out what they have learned was a secondary motive. If one is interested in gaging their learning, there are far better ways to do it than by forcing them to sit in a room and write for three hours. I don't know of other situations where people have to write under those circumstances, and the ability to perform in that setting strikes me as being of dubious value. Certainly, if you encourage people to write in that manner, you are leading them to write badly.

I tried to fashion questions that would require students to review the whole material of the course. I was hoping for succinct essays that showed both command and imagination. For the most part, I didn't get what I wanted.

I gave the students seven questions, and asked them to answer three, four, or five, depending on the exam grade they expected. They had the questions in advance of the examination period. Some wrote their answers outside class; others produced theirs in the time provided.

I am including only a half-dozen answers here. They don't make for scintillating reading, and six are enough to represent the whole.

They show that students are not naturally given to precision, and that they do have a certain affinity for repetition. They comport with what I learned from the classroom discussions: modern college students know virtually nothing of the past. The horror stories sprinkling the Sunday supplements over the past several years are all true. Whatever has been going on in the elementary and secondary schools, it has not been careful attention to previous times.

Given where they started, the students in this course learned considerable history. At the least, they learned something about the passage of time. They came to understand that ideas work their influence over centuries, and that several hundred years of impotence does not necessarily mean a thought is dead.

Interesting thoughts about the past require an adequate cultural vocabulary. In these answers, we can at times see embryonic development of vocabulary, but mostly we see that we have a long way to go.

DO YOU CONSIDER MARCUS AURELIUS TO HAVE BEEN AN EFFECTIVE EMPEROR? ANSWER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE REASONABLE GOALS OF THE EMPIRE AND MARCUS'S OWN PHILOSOPHY

Marcus Aurelius Antonius, born Marcus Annius Verus in AD 121, has been referred to as the last of the "good emperors" of the Roman Empire; the reign of his son, Lucius Aelius Aurelius Commodus ending a period of stable government which had begun in AD 70 with the reign of Titus Vespasianus. An able administrator and soldier, Aurelius is best remembered, however, for his phiosophical influence which he portrays in the classic stoic style in a series of essays which he entitled To Himself. Now known as the Aurelian Meditations, these thoughts and the form in which they were written exerted a significant influence on the subsequent development of Western/Judaeo-Christian thought.

This philosophical background, so well remembered eighteen centuries later, is the most visible outward expression of a reign which was most effective in the stability by which it is marked. While there were no spectacular successes or innovations in the empire during Aurelius' reign, there were no spectacular failures or disasters either.

Politically, he managed a period of co-rule with his adoptive brother Lucius Verus from AD 161 to 169; the first time the imperium had been shared, and peacefully as well. In addition his absolute rule (he did not take the customary oath not to execute senators, and restored the office of consular judge thereby taking direct legal control over Italy from the Senate) was marked by remarkably respectful relations with the Senate. This, in the face of two major wars and a severe outbreak of bubonic plague in AD 166, demonstrates a stability of rule which stands out in a succession of emperors sometimes marked by depravity rather than by ability.

Militarily, Aurelius continued the defensive system of the empire which had been begun by his predecessor, Titus Domitainus in AD 89. Under this system, the legions were permanently in separate camps on the frontier. This rigid structure hampered Aurelius's otherwise successful prosecution of hostilities against the Parthians and barbarians along the Danube frontier.

Portions of Aurelius's stoic upbringing, so readily evident in his later writings, are also clearly evident in the manifestations of his rule. His Meditations depict an almost selfless personality with strong overtones of the classical Roman virtues of honor, virtue, self-discipline, fortitude, and reason. The characteristics of his rule bear out these beliefs. Realizing the immensity of the empire and the problems which he faced in ruling it, Aurelius addressed the situation in a calm, rational, honorable manner by the means available to him. While a brilliant emperor might have won stunning successes (as did Vespasian) and vitalized a political entity, and a degenerate emperor might have squandered his rule in debauchery, squabbles and creating the opposite of unity (as did Commodus), Aurelius regarded his position as trying to do the best he could with what he had to work with. A scholar, perhaps seeing himself as unsuited to the political and military demands of the empire, Aurelius used what he knew best, the rational thought of the stoics, to stave off the emergencies which plagued the empire. He provided no long-term solutions. But his reign proved to be a period of peace and prosperity which was to end only too soon, becoming all the more significant in its passing.

....

I believe that Marcus Aurelius was a very able and effective leader. Considering the vastness of the Roman Empire and the multitudes he ruled, Marcus Aurelius maintained economic and national security and a system of justice. These three components are found in many working governments.

I found Marcus Aurelius to be very humanistic and concerned for the whole of his people. His reflections in Meditations support this idea of a genuine concern for his subjects. "What is not harmful to the city cannot harm the citizen. In every fancied case of harm, apply the rule, 'If the city is not harmed, I am not harmed either.'" Aurelius saw humanity as the interaction with his fellow man. To be a successful leader has to be in touch with the people and responsive to their needs. A good ruler must provide for the needs of the majority while at the same time respecting the beliefs of the minority. One group must not dictate the rules for all of the people. In deciding what is right for the whole a leader must weigh his own ethics. Marcus Aurelius was cautious in acting upon such matters. Yet he was firm:

> In one way humanity touches me very nearly, inasmuch as I am bound to do good to my fellow creatures and bear with them. On the other hand, to the extent that individual men hamper my proper activities, humanity becomes a thing as indifferent to me as the sun, the wind, or the creatures of the wild. True, others may hinder the carrying out of certain actions; but they cannot obstruct my will.

My impression of Marcus Aurelius was that throughtout his life he was a continuous student. He grew up being trained to lead Rome and as a soldier he learned to maneuver his legions. He set high expectations for himself, "... a man's worth is no greater than the worth of his ambitions." His writings in Meditations showed this. Nothing but the best, or at least a wholehearted attempt would be accepted. "Dig within. There lies the spring of good: ever dig and it will flow." From within ourselves comes the power to succeed.

He also showed an openness to change, if the change was self-initiated. In his soldiers and people he respected those who underwent a personal change to improve upon their character. For Marcus Aurelius, becoming the best person that one could be and developing your strength, was an ongoing process until death. He valued such qualities as industriousness and sincerity. "See how many qualities there are which could be yours at any given moment."

As a leader, he also showed a willingness to listen to other ideas besides his own. He was humble enough to admit mistakes in his actions and thoughts. "If anyone can show me, and prove to me, that I am wrong in thought or deed, I will gladly change. I seek the truth, which never hurt anybody." This type of attitude also set the basis for a system of justice because Marcus Aurelius was fair.

As a stoic, Marcus Aurelius maintained his composure throughout his reign. He, again, instilled this value upon the Romans. If the inevitable was to happen, one had to be calm enough to face it with the realization that others were experiencing the same thing. He said, "Nothing can happen to any man that Nature has not filled him to endure. Your neighbor's experiences are no different from your own ..." At such a time it is important to dig deep within yourself for a way to defer the situation or meet it head on. We all have means of coping and these are as unique as the individual. In agreement with this, Aurelius wrote: "Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present."

Within any society there is an economic division of classes. Marcus Aurelius not only recognized this but also the link between classes. "The mind of the universe is social. At all events, it has created lower forms to serve the higher, and then linked together the higher in mutual dependence of each other." He also saw the need for cooperation between classes to have a functioning society. Divided individuals are useless. It is only be joining forces that communities grow. Individuals as separate groups also hamper the governing of an empire:

> A branch severed from an adjoining branch necessarily becomes severed from the whole tree. A man, likewise, who has been divided from any of his fellows has thereby fallen away from the community .... The man by his feelings of hatred and aversion, brings about his own estrangement from his neighbor, and does not see at the time he has cut himself off from the framework of society.

A joint community working cooperatively will be more effective in maintaining economic and national security.

Another reason for his effective leadership was that Marcus Aurelius didn't seek for recognition. His effectiveness as a leader and soldier was a result of his upbringing. It was in his field journal he wrote, "the man who does one good does not cry it aloud, but passes straight on to a second." He implies that good acts are contagious and once started never cease. From his writings, we can see why he was such a well-liked and admired leader. He set high expectations for himself and his people. This may be the reason even today we admire him. His thoughts are applicable to a society far more advanced than the Roman empire.

IF YOU HAD BEEN LIVING IN PALESTINE DURING THE FIRST PART OF THE 1ST CENTURY, DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN DRAWN TO THE MESSAGE OF JESUS, OR DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THE POSITION TAKEN BY THE PHARISEES? IN YOUR ANSWER TAKE THE POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST INTO ACCOUNT

I'm not sure how I would have felt if I had been living in Palestine during the time of Jesus and his teachings. I would like to say that I would have been drawn to Jesus and accepted and believed his word, but I'm not certain that would be an honest statement. I can be somewhat sympathetic to the position taken by the Pharisees, but I don't think I would have taken their position of extreme opposition to Jesus.

I can kind of understand the Pharisees' position and why they opposed Jesus, but for some reason I can't see myself as someone who would share the Pharisees' beliefs. To me, the Pharisees seem to have been awfully pretentious in their beliefs. The word "Pharisee" means "separated ones," which is why these people were probably called this. The Pharisees practiced and advocated very strict observance of the scriptures of the Old Testament. They did this to such an extreme that they also believed that they were self-righteous or better than the rest of the people who didn't follow their strict beliefs. They considered themselves to be above or separate from anyone who didn't share their religious beliefs. I can't see myself as the kind of bold and conceited person who would think like the Pharisees obviously did, yet I can still be reasonably sympathetic to their situation.

I say this because even though I don't think I would have been a Pharisaist, I still might have had a certain amount of doubt about this man called Jesus who is suddenly preaching morals that even a perfect being would have difficulty following. I can see how the tension would grow between the Pharisees, who had believed that they were the supreme religious sect, and Jesus, who is suddenly bringing forth new laws from God that seem impossible to fulfill.

If Jesus were to come forth in today's society and preach the same way he did in Palestine, he would probably be thought of as some kind of nut. It is with great pains that I admit this, but let's face it, people just don't accept change easily. People would have a hard time believing in someone who suddenly comes forth and changes what they had once perceived to be the "Law" or word of God. When you consider how radically demanding these new laws were, it seems inevitable that there would be opposition.

It wasn't just the change in God's word that Jesus presented that bothered the Pharisees, it was the fact that their position as religious leaders was in jeopardy. I would imagine that it was pretty hard to claim religious supremacy while Jesus was preaching new laws and claiming to be the Son of God sent forth as the savior for mankind. The Bible tells us that even though the Pharisees only numbered around 6,000, their influence extended widely through society and that they more or less dominated the religious schools. When Jesus appeared, they felt their position was threatened and perhaps this bothered them more than the new laws Jesus presented. Because of the difference between the Law which the Pharisees followed and the sermons Jesus taught, many people began to question the Pharisees and their claim of self-righteousness.

Maybe the best example of this questioning is presented through Paul. Paul was a Pharisee who was converted to Christ. Jesus taught him that the Pharisees's beliefs were not right. He showed Paul that all the Pharisees did was set a standard the people could compare their sins to. The Pharisees didn't take the position of being held responsible for their sins. Jesus taught that people are responsible for their sins and then went about teaching God's "new laws" that would deliver them from sin. The only problem wasa that these new laws were greatly different from what was previously considered to be God's law and they were extremely difficult and challenging to fulfill, even for people as strict as the Pharisees. So along with the fact that Jesus threatened their position, I doubt they appreciated Jesus's attitude toward their beliefs about sin.

Even though I can understand why the Pharisees took the position they did, I still maintain that I wouldn't have been a part of a religion that placed themselves above others. But, in addition, I fully admit that I am somewhat of a sceptic and probably wouldn't have been easily convinced by Jesus either. This is why I can be sympathetic to the Pharisees while still refusing their beliefs.

WHAT ASPECTS OF HOMER'S HEROIC IDEAL ARE STILL WORTHY OF RESPECT, AND WHICH ARE OUTMODED IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 20TH CENTURY? ANSWER BY DISCUSSING INCIDENTS FROM THE ADVENTURES OF ODYSSEUS.

The Greeks prided themselves on being different from other men whom they thought were nothing but savages. The main difference the Greeks saw between themselves and people from other lands was an absence of slavery among their peasants. The Greeks believed other people were willing to be ruled and that it didn't bother them to be told exactly what to do. The Greeks, however, wanted to learn as much about life as they could. They believed this was the natural way for them to achieve freedom.

The heroes of Homer were a group of men who were totally adventurous. Most of these men had no strong ties with kindred; they depended mostly on their companions or personal followers, who were largely adventurers like themselves. They were untroubled by the duties attached to their tribes or families. These men practiced only war and nothing else. These heroes stand or fall by their personal qualities, their strength and courage, their loyalty and military honor.

When people compare Odysseus to the other heroes of Homer, they will find out that he expresses his curiosity to a larger degree than anyone else. In a way, it's hard for people to see adventurers like Agamemnon or Achilles outside the large and fashionable way of battle. However, with Odysseus, most people can imagine him almost anywhere. Down the ages, Odysseus has become a symbol of the Greek spirit of curiosity and adventure.

Anyway, most of the aspects of Homer's heroic ideal are still worthy of respect in today's world. The aspects that are still in "use" today are used by the United States Marine Corps. Being raised by Marines throughout my life, I have noticed that there are quite a few aspect still in use. Marines depend on their companions or fellow Marines. They are all basically adventurous and have strong ties with no others except their immediate families and the men they live and fight with. The Marines practice only war and nothing else, and they either stand or fall by their personal qualities. These qualities are their strength, their courage, their loyalty to one another and their military honor.

There are other aspects of Homer's heroic ideal not mentioned before. These are that the early adventurers burned their dead. They built altars for sacrifices in open, airy places, instead of building temples to worship their gods in. They also worshipped a collection of gods who were like themselves. And unlike modern-day adventurers, they would never work and never created a world, but only conquered and divided ones.

The reason that the last stated aspects of the heroic ideal aren't used or thought about is because if people just went around building altars and sacrificing animals to their gods, people would think they were crazy. I understand that there are some countries that still do sacrifice to their gods, and that's all right by me. However, most people today wish to achieve world peace and to do so, people just can't run around conquering countries.

In conclusion, there still are parts of Homer's heroic ideal going on throughout the world. The heroes of today are very closely related to the heroes of ancient Greece. Both are adventurous and have strong ties with the men they go on adventures with. They both practice war and nothing else. The Marines, however, do practice discipline as well as tactics. Although there are people still practicing parts of the heroic ideal, there are some aspects I hope people never have to revert to. Those aspects are the ones of conquering other lands.

HOW DISTORTED IS SHAKESPEARE'S PORTRAIT OF KING HENRY V? TAKING INTO ACCOUNT YOUR OWN SENSE OF HISTORY, DISCUSS THE PROPRIETY OF USING HISTORICAL FIGURES AS DRAMATIC CHARACTERS, AND RELATE IT TO SHAKESPEARE'S HABITS.

The battle of Agincourt occurred in 1415, whereas the first production of Henry V happened in 1599. The 1500s were a time when there were several reigns of Tutor kings. The audience Shakespeare had to "sell" his production to was different from those actually living in the time of the battle. Shakespeare had to glorify the Tutor reign. He needed to dramatize a great deal to make the production worthy of seeing.

The character of Henry V is made comical by Shakespeare. He is made to sound "easy going," and almost funny. This could be considered an image in the Tutor times. The historical or "real" Henry was a pretty serious and hard-nosed man. I mean, he kind of had to be in order to lead the battle of Agincourt. But, Shakespeare really wanted to make the character of Henry V likeable in Tutor times.

Shakespeare needed to create a unity with his previous plays, so he presented Henry as a wild guy who, as a teen, ran around with crazy John Falstaff. He states that there was a dramatic change in Henry when he became king. Canterbury states: "The courses of his youth promised it not. The breath no sooner left his father's body -- but that his wildness mortified him, seemed to die too." This change in Henry is supposedly not really true.

In true history, in 1415, Henry is motivated to battle out of his sense of medieval monarchy, and what he feels should be his, not in terms of glorifying the nation. Shakespeare, in his production of Henry V, makes it a matter of glorifying the nation. In 1415, the reign of kingship was more in terms of dynasties and royal families, and not nationalism. But in writing, Shakespeare is flowering nationalism. He creates something that really did not exist in 1415.

I personally feel it is okay for a writer to make such distortions in order to make the best production possible. The audience must realize that what they are seeing on stage is not the true historical event. They will need to find other resources to learn true historical facts. England demanded positive characters in 1599, so Shakespeare gave them to his audience, and stressed nationalism. He needed to dramatize history in order to draw in his viewers and to please the audience.

DOES DAVID, AS HE IS PRESENTED TO US IN 1ST AND 2ND SAMUEL, STRIKE YOU AS A HEROIC CHARACTER? DO YOU ADMIRE HIM? BE SURE YOUR ANSWER IS SUPPORTED BY SPECIFIC INCIDENTS FROM HIS LIFE

Over the centuries society in general hasn't changed to any great extent. Three thousand years ago, rules and etiquette were different, but general feelings about power, respect for others' proverbial turf had the same ramifications. Going by the Bible, I am unable to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The reason for the confusion comes from reading about many "God-chosen" men who had more than one wife or had their maids bear their children for them. Yet, the Bible is big on fidelity and such. On top of the apparent contradictions within the Bible, the 1980s are 3000 years removed from the time of King David. On the other hand, 1st and 2nd Samuel are clear in describing good and bad in terms of outcome -- who suffered? how? and why?

Character and heroship are difficult concepts to correlate due to the fact that a hero of 1100 B.C. wouldn't have the same prerequisites of a hero of the 20th century. Whether or not King David was a hero isn't a black or white question but a multi-faceted gray area. Introspection prior to judgment is a must, as it can be negatively or positively defended. David's life was dynamic and went through many phases, each of which might make him a hero to a given school.

Musicians may consider David a hero simply because his harp was the first musical instrument mentioned in the Bible. On the other hand, David was a mega-hero upon defeating Goliath. However, I feel that David was in a position that allowed him to win. Agreed, it would take courage for anyone, let alone a little guy, to face a known killing machine in a duel. But the scripture portrayed Goliath as a big, dumb slasher who had a reputation of hamburgerizing his opponents. No mention of talents or skill to give the impression that he was masterful in terms of a developed art. Goliath was just big and scary. David, though undoubtedly concerned for his own life, was cunning enough to realize an opportunity to apply brains vesus brawn. He was counting on one good shot from his sling to finish or at least to stun his opponent, to gain a decided advantage. Bluntly, he got lucky. Had David missed or hit him in the shoulder, the outcome would have been totally different. Unless David was a fast runner, Goliath would have hamburgerized him too. The advantages of David's cunning and skill were augmented by enough time and space to load and shoot the stone from his sling. After the first shot, Goliath might have closed the gap enough to prevent a second shot. Had that situation arisen, cunning and skill may have been useless. Another pummeled wimp? Unless David was Bugs Bunnyish enough to slip and slide through Goliath's hands, he would have gone down had his aim been off that day.

In the book of Samuel, specifically 1st Samuel, 1:14-18, David seemingly runs from Saul even though he has a venerable army to back him up. On the other hand, in Chapter 24, David ambushes Saul in a cave when he's relieving himself. Of all ways to defeat someone, this has to be a record. David again has no direct contact with the aggressor, but comes out smelling like a rose. I feel that the mightiest thing done here was his sparing Saul. Of course, from here on in, David takes his kingdom and becomes a mighty king and all, but he really seems to be a regular guy who got a lucky break. After all, back then someone with a tiny bit of sense could appear as a real leader with divine wisdom. Put that together with one or two good decisions and a leader is born,

This is all well and good until David becomes corrupt, as most dictators do, and begins doing nasty deeds. His downfall, which I believe negates any and all of his previous heroics, was his slimeball adultery with Bathsheba. He went too far when he had Uriah set up to take the arrow on the battle front in Chapter 11. I believe that was a true coward's act on David's part. He was too scared to fess up to his friend and tell him he had made his wife pregnant. Also notice that he had someone else do his dirty work for him in a sneaky and devious way so as not to draw attention to himself.

Yes, David was a hero of sorts. But David was either very lucky or a true recipient of God's divine intervention. By this I mean that he was really pretty much a wimp. He never really did any brave acts that would prove strength or even bravery. In contrast, what David did have was cunning. He used his wit to overcome, prevail and conquer. This system worked for David quite well. But, as previously mentioned, David messed up when he fooled around with Bathsheba. It was a typical power/corrupt act that would have this reader believe that David was a regular guy and not a man of God. Although Jimmy Swaggert is a man of God. Retrospectively, David's success is relatively based on timing. Which seems to be at least one key to David's quick exit from the court after the defeat of Goliath (are you defeating a moose when you shoot it from 50 yards with a 30-06?)

In closing, David was apparently heroic at times, but the main thing to keep in mind was that he was a man. A shrewd one at that.

Course Evaluations

The following comments were written by the students on the day of the final examination, with the understanding that the instructor would not look at them until the grades had been turned in. Twelve students signed their names to the forms; three did not.

The students took fifteen to twenty minutes to fill out the forms. Consequently, these are impromptu remarks, and probably reflect all the strengths and weaknesses that go with hasty answers.

The evaluations require little analysis. If nothing else, they have the virtue of being straightforward. They seem generally positive. That may not mean much. Students tend to be positive on evaluations. However, reading between the lines, I have the sense that several of the students have gained a different sense of what learning means and will approach serious literature more openly. And, if that's the case, the course accomplished some of what it set out to do.

There are some negative comments. One student found the material boring; one said the course was pitched at too high an intellectual level. If there were no negative comments, we would have to wonder about the honesty of the respondents.

As for my self-evaluation: there is much I could have done better. Over the past twenty years I have evolved from the sort of teacher who would say that it's up to the student to make what he or she can of the material presented to one who believes that hot pursuit is the chief pedagogical virtue. A truly good teacher will insist that a student learn. Yet, in higher education, we have to face the truth that the pursuit of students is exhausting work. They are not any longer children. We cannot demand that they adopt habits that make learning easy. We have to be ready to see our advice rejected over and again.

At the end of a course, I always wish I had had more energy to put into it. And in this case, I wish that any extra energy I might have summoned had been used to persuade students to remain engaged with their learning. Most academic failure is the result of disengagement.

Finally, the evaluations strengthen my conviction that study of the sort we did in this course is essential for college students. There is no substitute for confronting the basic literary and historical documents of one's own culture.
I think the students speak revealingly about this, and, for that reason alone, they warm my heart.

Evaluation, I.C. 211

Fall 1988

DID YOUR ATTITUDES, OR VALUES, CHANGE AS A RESULT OF TAKING THIS COURSE? IF SO, EXPLAIN HOW.

* I don't feel that my values have but some of my attitudes have changed about certain things.

* I have to say yes, as I have begun to teach religion classes for Jackie Provost because I met her through this course. I had been out of my religion for approximately 5 years.

* I think if anything changed it would be my values towards God. Meaning looking up to him.

* My attitude toward writing has been greatly influenced in this class just because of the amount the teacher wrote to us each day.

* My attitudes toward what liberal arts courses offer has been intensified. I feel that they are geared toward people who never received rounding through their parents and peers.

* Yes, my attitude has changed greatly since I've been in this class, it's gotten much more sympathetic. My values have changed as well, I feel that what I own are more important now.

* No.

* Yes, as a result of this class I visited the learning skills center. I realized that I needed help in refining and developing better writing skills.

* No, they were enhanced with deeper and greater knowledge of these studied topics.

* No, well, that's not entirely true. I guess I realized how it is important to read these books (Bible, Odyssey)

* I think that my values have changed and attitudes due to the fact that I can now somewhat see people's points on issues, but can also find other round about routes as solutions that people must wonder if ever were thought about in the first place.

* I feel that I became much more informed as to the origins of our culture and this had a very positive effect on my outlook.

* I learned a great deal about the value of "change" over time

by reading the selected texts.

- I'm not really sure if they changed. Maybe it would be better to say that as a result of this course I've examined my beliefs to a greater extent and tried to find out why I hold the attitudes and values that I do. If they have changed, I have not really realized it yet. Maybe this is something I need to examine next.

DID YOU DEVELOP INTELLECTUAL SKILLS AS A RESULT OF THE COURSE? EXPLAIN WHAT THEY ARE.

- Yes I did. I believe that I develop new intellectual skills everytime I enter a new learning environment. I feel that this class helped me to develop a more logical approach to my thinking.

- I have learned to write more critical essays, I believe, than I ever had in the past. In the past I had always been unsure of how to criticize without tearing apart. Everytime I had tried to do this I was told that my reading was off and I had not gotten the correct meaning from the text that I was supposed to have.

- One type of skill I developed further was reading. I usually do not read unless I am assigned to do so therefore I feel satisfied with my accomplishment of doing so.

- In reading great literary books and learning how to interpret them, I've developed skills.

- Reading and interpretation skills were sharpened, but minimally.

- I have developed my intellect skills. Now I can pick up things that I always miss when reading. I also have a better understanding of historic events.

- Thinking about what I read.

- No.

- I developed a more intellectual ability to write and conceive ideas, than normally are thought of.

- No.

- Same as last question.

- I think that what I developed was much more generalized than the question is referring. I was able to start viewing things as a whole instead of focusing on specifics.

* I must say I learned how to budget my own time with the readings and the paper.

* I don't know if I developed any skills that I didn't already have, but I do know that this course made me think. It made me think more in depth about current events in our world than I had previously. It made me think about things that I hadn't ever dreamed I would spend so much time thinking about. Examples of this could be predestination, knowledge, or even what it takes to be a leader or ruler.

DO YOU THINK YOUR FUTURE READING HABITS WILL BE AFFECTED AS A RESULT OF TAKING THE COURSE? HOW?

* No because I feel that I am and was a strong reader before the class. I do feel that it has improved my reading skills some.

* Not very much. I've always liked to read all types of books. I will admit that philosophical books had not yet entered into my reading regulars, but I'm also not sure that I would ever read that type on my own again. I am glad that I got the opportunity to read them, though.

* Yes, because with the kind of readings we did throughout the course, one learns to read between the lines.

* I think I can interpret future readings a little easier because of this class.

* My habits won't change. However, the way I interpret those habits will.

* I've developed the knack to pick up useful and important things out of books.

* Maybe, depends on how much time I have and how interested I am in the book.

* Yes, I will be better able to judge the material I need to read and how long it takes me to digest the material. I also have a different perspective of literary works.

* Yes, knowing that deadlines will occur and reading brings about a better understanding to all about many things.

* I will definitely read the entire Bible.

* I think that now I'll start thinking more about the political (governmental) side of issues more now without first just saying "This is how things should be done."

- Right now, honestly, I don't think I will be reading for a while related to the course demand, but when I do start, it will be with a new perspective.

- I will be more "open-minded" to read various kinds of texts.

- Definitely. If there was one thing that I definitely leave this course with, it would be the way my reading has improved. Up until this course, I found myself reading but not questioning the texts enough. I would read material and accept it much in the same way you enter data into a computers memory. I think that now I tend to question the material more to see if I'm really understanding what it is that I think the text is trying to say.

WHAT EFFECT, IF ANY, DID THE COURSE HAVE ON YOUR THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY?

- I feel that it helped me to realize that there are alot of different ideas about what social responsibility and that what may be right for one person isn't always right for another person.

- This has changed a little, mostly because of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations. That was the book that most greatly effected me in this course. I really spent extra time finishing and thinking about this book where I had not always gotten to the last bit of the other books.

- None

- ----

- The course reaffirmed that I am on the right track in terms of my duty to society and what I should expect from others.

- I have become more aware of social responsibility and can understand that its hard to control.

- That different cultures think and act on it in different ways.

- None

- The course enlightened me towards the idea of social responsibility and all that pertains to them (the individuals or the society and the role they play).

- I looked at democracy and monarchism a little differently than before. I learned what I feel justice is and what it means.

- I saw how social responsibility has a great aspect on the outcome of given issues/problems in this society. I also found that people tend to lean more towards the financial/economic responsibility instead of socially what is best for the people involved.

- For myself, it just gave justification to what I was already doing.

- No effect

- It didn't have too much effect on this. I've always considered myself to be somewhat of a "Socially responsible" person. Once again, it probably just made me think about it more than I would have otherwise.

DID THE INSTRUCTOR APPEAR PREPARED FOR THE COURSE?

- I feel that you were. You know more than I did on the subject therefore you did have knowledge to convey.

- Yes, always.

- Yes, everyday he was prepared with an overall paper about our discussions as we went along.

- Yes, very!!

- He seemed prepared, but not necessarily for "IC-211." The general outline of the course seemed vague and disorganized. It's new!

- Yes, I believe that V.P. Turner was well prepared for it. He always knew what he was talking about.

- Yes, he always thought about what he wanted to talk about.

- Yes -- and very knowledgeable about the material. The daily sheets he gave us summarized the previous class and were beneficial in preparing for the final.

- Yes, the instructor was very well prepared for the class and well educated on almost every topic discussed and brought up.

- Yes

- Yes very. I don't think I have ever had a professor who was more organized in all my life. You were always prepared on subjects and had an amazing filing system -- great sense of organization. It really shocked me because although this may be a stereotype, most men stay as far away from organization as possible.

- Always. (answer included illustration of a circle with a smile in it)

- Yes, always very prepared.

- Yes. As far as I can tell he seemed to have been fairly well prepared to teach whatever lessons he had in mind for each specific day.

HOW MIGHT THE INSTRUCTOR HAVE BEEN MORE HELPFUL TO YOU -- EITHER IN OR OUT OF CLASS?

- I feel that a more detail reading assignment would be helpful.

- Less academic minded, we don't all have Ph D's yet.

- More in class writing assignments

- He would have been much more helpful if I, made the time to see him?

- He seemed highly willing to answer anything. And he also demonstrated a general knowledge for history trivia.

- He was very helpful. Always giving new ideas, and was always willing to talk to a student at any time.

- Given our assignments more spread out. Instead of 5 papers due the last day spread them out through the semester and discuss more about the material covered.

- More of a lead up to our essay, such as mini writing responses to passages within book. I think that given the amount of material we covered, we needed three full class periods rather than the writing tutorial.

- Giving deadlines on the readings maybe quizies or creative writing. To make sure or press the effort to read.

- I felt the class was very boring. When we did class discussions or things that required opinions I liked it more.

- I can't think of any way.

- I think that if we had had more time for discussion it would have helped us to grasp the topics more (but with the time we had we faired pretty well.)

- He was always helpful in and out of class.

- I'm not really sure about this. He was pretty helpful when presented with questions about material.

WERE YOU SATISFIED WITH YOUR OWN PERFORMANCE? IF NOT, HOW WOULD YOU WANT TO CHANGE IT?

* No, I never am. I always feel that I could have done more no matter what the subject matter is.

* I should have done the essays as we read and not waited until Thanksgiving to start them. I found that I remembered what the stories were about but could not find the quotes I wanted to use.

* I was satisfied.

* No. If I could go back, I would have prepared myself better for the term paper and exam.

* I could have spent more time on the course, but other major courses took precedent. I got back what I put in it.

* I did o.k. but could have done better if I had only tried harder.

* Kind of -- I should have put more time into the paper and essays.

* No, I couldn't keep up with the reading and needed to pace myself better.

* No, I would try to encourage myself to do better in preparing for everything.

* I did not read all the material and therefore was not prepared for class.

* No, not really. I had too much going what with working 52 hours a week and full time classes -- also emotional problems -- I believe that I could have gotten a better grade if more time had been available to me.

* I am pretty satisfied with my performance although I must say I would have liked to spend a little more time on my readings than what I did.

* Yes, I was pretty satisfied -- I just would like to have participated more.

* Yea, I guess to some extent. I'm never totally satisfied with my performance in anything, because once you are, you never try harder or push further.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU WILL MOST REMEMBER FROM HAVING TAKEN THE

COURSE?

*	The writing exercises. I feel that they truly caused me to think about some important issues.

*	Marcus Aurelius

*	Reading the Bible

*	The Odyssey

*	The word "perplexing"

*	Learning more about ancient cultures and literature

*	Having to read the Bible

*	The flop of an essay I wrote and the evaluation that you wrote for me.

*	I will remember all the readings with greater insight and the enlightening lectures.

*	--

*	Your immense organization and how involved you became in these subjects in history. It really shows that history is a subject you love.

*	That opinions are personalized and have a direct effect on our outlook.

*	Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and Henry V

*	Just to really think, and question without accepting things blindly.

WHAT EFFECT, IF ANY, DO YOU THINK THE COURSE WILL HAVE ON YOUR LIFE IN THE FUTURE?

*	I don't know I try to take one day at a time. Today is always the best time to do what you could do tomorrow.

*	My critical writing has improved, it was critical writing that always brought me down in high school.

*	My values towards God --

*	I like to write more now, just for me!

- Reinforcement of the need for us as Americans to continue to agree to disagree.
- Make me more aware of our past.
- I don't really know
- The ability to explore and question the meaning of any text.
- This course will effect me in the use of deadlines and enjoyable readings, along with the ability to stop and take in what the story is telling us and what it has to offer.
- I'm not real sure it will. I think we had a great professor, but its the material I didn't like (except the Bible).
- Again, I believe I will look at more issues from a political or more political standpoint, than from a more moral and "Well, this is right, and that's the way it should be done," attitude.
- What the course gave me was a better understanding of what our culture (and others) is based on. And from this I feel I will be able to have a better understanding in the future of current events and our progress.
- Being more knowledgeable in the various texts we read over the semester.
- Probably it will make me look at myself more and try to reach a better level of understanding in why I feel the way I do or express the thoughts I do.

END OF [illegible]